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# SPIRITUAL PROGRESS.

BY

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OF

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## PREFACE.

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THERE are in use among Catholics numerous books containing dogmatical explanations, controversy, and rules for attaining Christian perfection. Many of them are of the highest order of excellence, being written even by saints. But there is a dearth of works, especially in English, to explain what such writings presuppose and take for granted. There are many books written to train up holy men and women in the higher grades of Prayer, but there are few to teach inquiring Protestants, recent converts, and fervent but uninstructed Catholics how to be good, and so how to take the steps that must precede being perfect.

“Spiritual Progress” is a familiar exposition of Catholic morality, which has for its object to tell people of common intelligence what they are expected to do in order to be good Christians, and how they shall do it, and the results that will follow.

The reader is encouraged to go as far as it is his duty, but warned of the evil effects that may ensue if he should go too far and set up his own personal views against the teachings of the Church.

The work is suggestive, for its object is to induce people to think. Whenever it has fairly presented a subject, it leaves it in its freshness and seeks not to exhaust it. It gives the results of much study and long years of observation, but spares the reader cumulative proof, and the reference, text, or quotation, which may be called the author's legal warrant for what he says. The subjects treated, and the style of their treatment, place this work among that class of easy instructions on the practical working of our Religion, which, given by the living voice, are common among us, but which are not easily procured in print. The chief object in view is to do away with vague and uncertain notions of what is right and what is wrong on the subjects treated of, and to encourage people to take more pleasure in reflecting upon their religion.



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# SPIRITUAL PROGRESS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### CHARACTER.

No two leaves in the forest are exactly the same in form and texture. No two grains of sand from the sea-shore or the great African desert are identical in bulk and outline. Even the two drops of water most alike in the universe will exhibit some marks of distinction when submitted to a powerful microscope.

The law that excludes duplicates from the visible kingdoms of nature, is also a law of the moral world. From Adam to the last man, no two faces will be found exactly the same; and variety in trait and

lineament of human character is as inexhaustible as in man's outward appearance. The power which in one man's moral composition is ardent, demonstrative, predominant, in another lies dormant or dead. The craving which in one breast concentrates upon itself the whole mind and will, before its voice can be silenced or its yearnings appeased, is never felt, scarcely understood, by a being of a different organization. The weakness of the weak man is laughed at in scorn by the strength of the strong; moral pulp and steel travel side by side, and souls of fine porcelain and delicate crystal tremble in the near presence of iron and granite.

This endless variety in beings so much alike gives rise to endless variety of wants. The religious truth that would deal with these wants so as to satisfy each and all, must be universal. All religious teaching that is narrow and contracted; all that is not world-embracing; all that is fitted only



for special classes, is proven at once not to be the word of God. When God made man's nature, He made it with all the variety of wants above described. When He made religion, He knew it would have to meet and satisfy all these wants, and He fitted it to meet and satisfy them.

Every man who is saved has to be redeemed, but the work of redemption is not exactly the same in any two subjects on whom the truth exerts its beneficent influence.

Let us not, then, attempt to condemn one another lightly and without due reflection. I must insist that my Catholic neighbor shall live and die for Catholic truth. He, too, must admit that without some external forms, his piety and devotion will not be practical and active. But we will do well not to insist upon imposing the special practices that we severally prefer one upon the other, provided we are both sound in the substance of the faith.

Every good thing has its usefulness, but uncharitable and unwise censure is not good, and has no recognized place in the Catholic Church.

## CHAPTER II.

## FAITH.

THERE is a great difference in the nature of people's faith. One person is hard and slow in believing, and seemingly fears that he may believe too much; another is impressible and credulous, as though he were in constant danger of not believing enough. One is exceedingly difficult to convince, and yields up the field of his thoughts grudgingly, inch by inch, only when he cannot help himself: while the other proceeds on the principle that you cannot have too much of a good thing, and is willing not only to give a ready assent to matters not easily understood, but even to give it without inquiring into the reasons. One will believe nothing that extends beyond the ken of his eye, the

stretch of his hand, or the grasp of his intelligence ; another exercises, in religious matters, the faculty of the marvellous, and takes in legends, and stories of miracles, and statements of the temporal efficiency and success of his creed, even in contradiction to the principles of the creed itself. One party makes of every dream a vision of light, the other reduces every vision of light to a dream. One does not go far enough forward, the other overleaps the bounds of rational judgment, and goes too far to be safe.

There are two elements in the conviction to which we give utterance when we make what is called an act of faith : a human and a divine element. The human element is the assent of the mind expressed by the words, I BELIEVE, and the divine is the grace of God, enabling us to receive His revelations as true on the authority of His infallible Word. The two classes of persons we have described fail in making a full and

true act of faith, the former because they want to make it all rational, all human, all rising from below, and thus exclude the divine element; the latter because, from a mistaken respect for revelation, they wish to make the act all supernatural, all divine, all coming from above, and thus exclude the human element. A true act of faith is the act of man, and must always be the product of man's intelligence and will, and therefore, a human act.

You need not feel uneasy if your religious conviction does not crush you down with the inevitable weight of a mathematical proposition. Mathematical propositions do not depend for their integrity, on your moral nature, but your act of faith does, and it is therefore apt to grow faint and pale at certain times, like the burning light which is used as its emblem, while at other times, it strengthens in warmth and brilliancy, and shines afar with a vigorous and steady flame. You may be



tempted to doubt, or to grow weak in the faith, but fear nothing—for the bolder the assault the greater will be the opportunity afforded you to gain merit before God by a brave and persistent defence. Faith will do its office for you in this pilgrimage, leading you on to the realm of light where your motive for conviction will be no longer the fact that you are told the truth by the voice of God, but the knowledge which God will give you when you come to be enlightened with the glory of His Divine Countenance beaming love and joy upon you forever.

It is our duty to strengthen the two elements of faith while we are in this life. We can strengthen the human element by impressing more and more clearly and distinctly upon our intelligence the truths of religion, by bringing our emotions and affections more and more under the control of religious principle, and by carefully guarding against the damages which arise

from the commission of sin. We can strengthen the grace of God within us by being faithful to what light and strength we have already received, and by prayer that God in His goodness may give us further grants of grace, making us still more pure and worthy in His sight. Harmony between human energy and the grace of God leads one to perform repeated acts of faith, and we form what is called the habit of faith, so that our life comes by degrees to be governed readily and sweetly by the truths and principles of revealed religion.

## CHAPTER III.

## LIVELY FAITH.

It is not an arduous task to acquire faith. It is done easily when, guided by the assistance of God, we turn our faculties to right use, seeking for that which is more precious than any science, the knowledge of God, who fails not to reveal himself to the honest and earnest seeker. More serious work is required to make and keep our faith what it ought to be, namely, a steady light within us, giving brightness, heat, and vigor to our whole spiritual life; feeding it as its source and centre, and holding under discipline all the activity of our outward life.

The unreplenished and untrimmed lamp, in which the oil is allowed to be consumed, the flame untidy and uncared for,

is next to useless, and is in danger of speedily becoming so altogether.

A faith which is merely an old habit, but which shows no signs of activity; a faith which is confused and gross for want of power and sufficient instruction; a faith which is languid and puny, so that we hardly ever think of it, or if at all, only in a careless manner, as though it were no concern of ours, is not sufficient to save us. There is work to be done to save a soul, and such a faith is too weak to do this work. It has not strength and heat enough to fill and flood our veins with the life-blood of spiritual vitality. Now, whose faith, let us ask, is of this dead-and-alive nature? The faith of all who are merely religious by custom and on the surface, and who do not nourish and strengthen their faith, guarding it as they would any other virtue, against exposure and temptation.

There are reasons enough in God why

our faith should be infinite in its beauty and glory, because there is in God infinite truth ; but at the same time we possess no infinite capacity to have and to hold infinite faith, but there are in our nature meannesses and weaknesses enough to explain how our faith may grow pale and faint, and at length wither and die out altogether.

Faith is the health of the spiritual man. It must, by his co-operation with the grace of God, be kept strong, holding his intellect in subjection to the First and Eternal Truth. It must be enlightened, to supply man with knowledge of the mysteries of God, their bearing and consequences. It must, moreover, be deep-seated and fruitful, as it is the root of all the virtuous interests and actions in which the whole man or his separate faculties are engaged. The faith that does not cause the heart of man to bloom with the flowers and plants of Christian virtue, giving them moisture and

heat to develop their growth, is of no more use to the soul than rain and sunshine represented to the eye by a painter's art would be to a garden or an orchard.

He who makes a full act of Faith cannot help making an act of Charity. The faith we speak of here, is not purely intellectual nor speculative; it is a practical, earnest faith, that cannot help going to work in favor of the cause it embraces. This faith is not only the assent of the mind that believes, but is, at the same time, the movement of the will that anxiously wants to believe. It is the light of the understanding, discovering and recognizing the truth held out to it by the Almighty; and it is the grasp of the will, reaching, embracing, and folding to its heart of hearts the bright heavenly gift, which thus becomes our property.

He who represses his passions, and marshals all his faculties into subjection to religious principle, is comparatively free



from outbreaks of the lower and rebellious powers of human nature. He possesses the faith, and the faith possesses him. A new energy burns and spreads in his spirit, enabling him to perform with unwonted ease, wondrous deeds of self-sacrifice in the service of God and of his fellow-men.



## CHAPTER IV.

## THE FELLOWSHIP OF FAITH.

A SOLDIER who marches into action with a solid phalanx of comrades around him, experiences very different sensations from the lonely picket, who stands guard at the silent outlet of a wood, or under the crest of a rock in the wilderness. The first is energized and fired by the power of a whole legion, of which he is part, while the second has but a solitary will and one right arm to depend upon in case of a danger which may break upon him from any quarter at a moment's warning.

The inventor, the discoverer, the leader of his age, the man of great heart and powerful mind, are nearly always condemned to the complete isolation of the solitary vidette. Genius must outstrip the multi-

tude in its rapid forward strides ; it soon leaves far behind the common public ; passes one by one, the few who herd not with the crowd ; and, at length, being alone, it finds that in leaving behind the ignorance of mankind, it has also left its sympathy. To have genius is to be alone.

He who founded true Religion, gave to it the form of a family in which He is the Father, and all mankind are brothers and sisters. Their prayer was never selfish, for it was addressed to "Our Father" in common by all, and he who did not lovingly aid the neighbor whom he saw in need, was pronounced to be no lover of God, whom he could not see. Whatever act of devotion to God, or charity towards our fellow-man is done by one of us forms part of the general fund of merit and belongs to all. Whatever is done, under God's favor, by the faith and zeal of all members throughout the world; belongs to each individual soul as much as his own

private virtuous acts and their reward. Each prays for all, and all pray for each other.

There are continuous streams of wisdom and goodness which God pours forth into the mind and heart of his Church ; all these, too, belong to each of her children. They are new grants of light and strength to enable each one to persevere bravely in the performance of his duty, and to resist all attempts on the part of his enemies to drive him or entice him into the commission of evil. No friend can benefit the Church without conferring a blessing on every soul she is engaged in saving, and no one can attempt the injury of a single soul without having arrayed against him, the whole power of the divine kingdom, of which God Himself is the Founder and the King.

Let us love to meet together in the place consecrated to public worship, there to join in the Prayer of Faith with our breth-

ren. In that holy place, we feel that there is a fellowship binding us together as one family, and we grow stronger as we reflect upon the truth that no child of God is ever left to struggle unfriended and alone. Whether temptation rushes upon the soul during the glare and noise of daily warfare, or whether it creeps stealthily toward its intended victim during the dark and silent hours of the night, the great heart of the Church beats with maternal anxiety for each of her children; her voice rises unceasingly in supplication to God that the sufferer may be saved from all difficulty and danger.

Good angels glide from earth to heaven, offering the earthly prayers that flower up from the heart of humanity under the patient cultivation of Religion. They are welcomed, blessed, and wrought with wondrous skill into the wreaths that adorn that ladder between the earth and the sky which gladdened the vision of the slum-

bering Prophet of old. The summit of that ladder leads to the Eternal Throne itself, and its foot is planted by the side of whatever mortal is in need of strength to come out victorious from strife with his spiritual enemies.

The consequence of this teaching is, that even the humblest believer has it in his power to put in motion the whole machinery of the Church in his own behalf, to move heaven and interest all the powers thereof in his defence. His prayer, if made with true faith, becomes infallible in its effects, like that prayer which stilled the winds and the sea, released mankind from every sort of ailment and suffering, and even called forth from the cold embrace of the tomb the form of the friend and follower of the Blessed Messiah.



## CHAPTER V.

## CONSCIENCE.

CONSCIENCE is aptly styled the inward monitor. Its office is similar to that of a friend who should outwardly call attention to the right and the wrong of our doings, with wisdom and authority.

We may not be able to determine whether Conscience is a special faculty or power within us, or simply reason pointing out the lawfulness or unlawfulness of what we are doing. Each one, nevertheless, has heard the monitor within, the still small voice distinctly approving or condemning his actions or affections. This voice speaks before we act in the wrong; warning us that we are under a strict moral obligation to avoid the evil deed towards which we are hurriedly drawn on ;

it speaks while we are acting, clearly telling us that we are doing a wicked action, and it speaks after the deed is done, upbraiding us with our unfaithful behavior, and punishing us with the stings of Remorse.

The conscientious faculty may be educated and refined like other faculties of the mind and heart; its perceptions may be quickened, and its dictates made clear and bright. It may also become dull and slow, fulfilling its functions in a sluggish and ineffectual manner. The ear of a woodsman, and the eye of a mariner become wonderfully quick by constant practice and attention, detecting sights and sounds with readiness and certainty which are imperceptible to the unpractised and untrained dwellers in cities. In like manner the inward moral sense is improved and strengthened by proper training; it learns to descry evil afar off, and give timely warning of the approach of moral danger.



It is no less certain that conscience is shaped and guided by the character of its possessor. Those who are ardent and bold in other things, will be the same in adopting a course of conduct, or in forming an attachment, while the timid and slow will waver in doubt, and only form a practical judgment perhaps, when the time for action has gone by.

The study of our own nature, and of the various wants which belong to it, shows us in this instance, as in numberless others, the wisdom and goodness of the Author of our Religion. Conscience is not left to grope in the dark after principles of right and wrong, and to act in painful doubt and uncertainty under the guidance of mere opinion. The revelations of faith strengthen and confirm the dictates of good with which the natural law supplies it; they carry forward and expand man's limited knowledge, and end by giving him fixed principles to guide him so that he

may in action embrace the right and avoid the wrong.

The living voice of the Church affords direction to the uncertain and timid conscience ; confirms the resolute and strong in well-doing ; heals the effects of waywardness in the past, and leads on the soul in peaceful ways to the tasks and the rewards of the untried future.

## CHAPTER VI.

## NATURE AND GRACE.

GRACE is not the result of good works, but good works are the result of grace. Even the first correct thought, the earliest yearning, the most faintly dawning desire in the way of eternal salvation, are less remote in the history of the soul's life, than that impulse from above which preceded every effectual tendency towards virtue and the love of God. The Divine Spirit lives before the human spirit which is its offspring, and the work of God is older than the work of man. We cannot serve God and fulfil his law by our own power, and we cannot of ourselves deserve the assistance which is indispensable that we may serve and obey him. Such assistance is a free gift of God, not granted in virtue

of any obligation on the part of the giver, nor yet in virtue of any rightful claim on the part of the receiver.

A clear and practical notion of what the grace of God really is, will materially aid us in our study of the science of salvation. What then is Grace? It is light which God gives to the intelligence of man that he may know what is true, and strength which God gives the will of man that he may do what is right. This light and strength assist the mind in its progress towards truth and justice, but they do not force it onward. The strong hand of a father leads forward the little child whom he would teach to walk, bears him up and supports him, but the child walks of his own accord, he is not dragged on in spite of himself. The grace of God, St. Augustine tells us, is the inspiration of love. In two words he describes the elements of which practical and effectual grace is composed; namely, the impulse and motive coming

down from God to the soul, and the full and free response of the soul rising joyfully towards God.

Now when the impulse from above loses its novelty it becomes an abiding influence, a settled habit, a controlling power in the interior life, rendering man uniformly desirous of acting for the best, and so forming him gradually into a just and holy person acceptable to his God, who recognizes in him an adopted son and an heir of the kingdom of heaven.

It was to merit this heavenly treasure for man and bring it within his reach, that the Son of God came upon earth and assumed the form and features of the sinful race which He came to save. What He, the true Son of the Most High, claims in virtue of His birthright, we claim in virtue of our adoption as children of God, in virtue of the merits of our Redeemer, and of the kind promises of our merciful and loving Father in heaven.

God who is the Giver of Grace is also the Author of Nature. The supernatural impulses with which He inspires the soul do not destroy any of the powers with which He endowed it, do not uproot or alter any of its faculties, do not extinguish any of its inherent affections or emotions. These powers, faculties, and affections are the materials which Divine Grace uses as the groundwork of its operations. Grace refines, elevates, and perfects them, but does not war against them. They are supplied with impulses more noble than merely natural motives of action can supply, they are assisted and supported by strength far superior to that of the powers of nature alone, they are led to work for a final purpose infinitely above any object that nature can propose as the reward of their exertions. But it is true, nevertheless, that Grace does not take them away, nor does the influence of Grace ever affect them so far that they cease to be purely energies of



human nature. The God of Grace and of Nature is the same God ; both are good in their sphere, and both give honor and glory in their own way to their common Lord and Preserver.



## CHAPTER VII.

## PRAYER AND WORK.

WHEN the soul prays she rises and adores ; she rises to the Divine presence, and adores the infinite goodness and majesty of the Divinity. In its full and perfect sense, prayer can be addressed to no being unless to God, because there is no perfect prayer without adoration, and adoration can be given to God alone. Prayers to the saints, prayers in the presence of holy images that remind us of holy things, prayers whispered with the lips, prayers sung with the voice or read with the eyes, and all such pious actions are only preparatory steps, useful because they help us to reach mental prayer, which alone is prayer complete and perfect.

It is not a difficult performance to think

lovingly of God who has been so good to us, yet whenever we welcome a thought that reminds us of God, when we are gladdened by an emotion that draws us nearer to Him—we have prayed. How simple a thing then, and again how sublime a thing is prayer! It may be awakened in the soul by a flower, by the song of a bird, by a rosy cloud or a whispering breeze, by the touching plaint of an instrument, the devotional air of a chapel, or the sight of a face pure and pious in its beauty, and yet from such humble beginnings it may lift up the spirit to the foot of the Divine throne, and lap it in the ecstasy of heavenly love. It has its origin in simple remembrance and its end in seraphic adoration.

Take courage, therefore, and be of great heart, O ye workers, who pass your lives, not in the pleasant shade of the sanctuary, but out in the sunny and dusty ways of the busy world! The great official act of prayer is the turning of the mind and heart

to God. Outward things need not prevent the mind from rising and adoring. Outward occupation attended to for Him will even assist and not be in the way. Not the whisperings of the tongue only, but the working of the hands as well, may dispose you for mental prayer. For if you do your work in a proper spirit it will remind you of God, and this prompting is the beginning of prayer.

Those who pray must mean to pray with proper feeling ; they must wish to be humble, trustful, and persevering in their piety. Let the worker apply himself to his appointed task, to the duties of his condition in life with similar dispositions. Let him remember that he is working by God's appointment, and for God's sake. Let him do his work in no selfish or worldly manner, but in a pious, humble, trustful, and persevering spirit, and he will find that prayer unbidden will mingle with his work ; that the spirit of prayer will

sanctify his engagements, his labors, and his trials. His work will become prayer. It will be recognized as the result of sanctifying grace, and worthy to be rewarded by the great Master of the household.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## DEVOTION.

THERE are souls of a stern and resolute nature, who lean firmly upon positive facts, reason themselves unrelentingly into the performance of duty, and cut their way through all the entanglements of nature by dint of pure logic, as the woodman cuts his way through the underbrush of the forest by the edge of his hunting-knife.

There are other souls who yearn for sympathy; look at things first through imagination, and then through reason; who love to pick their way along in a dainty, slow, irresolute manner, putting aside the branches that cross their path, and pausing to gaze on every flowery bank and purling brook, and mossy seat,

they happen to pass in the journey towards the sunlit plains which lie far beyond the shadow and silence of the woodland.

Both of these classes can become devoted servants of their heavenly Master, and there is room for both in the final home. Justice and Prudence, however, have some words of advice to bestow upon each.

The softer soul—gentle and amiable from its very weakness—is apt to allow the external practices of devotion to usurp all her attention, and win her attachment, forgetting that they are not the end to be striven for, but only means towards the attainment of that end. It is a good and holy custom to pray to the Virgin Mother, to the Angels, to the Apostles, the Martyrs, the Confessors, and the Virgins, and to ask their intercession. But the weak sister must be admonished that the best way to honor the Saints and Servants of



God, is not to confine one's self to singing hymns in their praise. It is necessary, in addition, to put into practice the faith, charity, purity, constancy, humility, generosity, courage, and self-sacrifice of which they left us such glorious examples.

The best kind of prayer is that which is addressed to God. In the solemn Sacrifice of the Mass all the prayers are addressed to God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Ghost, or to the Ever-Blessed Trinity, One God. The Mother of Our Lord and His Servants and Saints are commemorated, but no favor is implored or expected, unless through Jesus Christ Our Lord and Saviour, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth One God, world without end.

Christian Religion means the love and service of Jesus Christ, and the communion of Saints is a means towards attaining this indispensable love which alone can save our souls. Let the preacher, then, preach Christ



and Him Crucified as did Paul the Apostle, and let the faithful believer and adorer reckon upon no practice of devotion, no intercession or commemoration that does not place the Divine Redeemer, the lover of pure souls, prominently before the eyes of His followers.

But what of the man of principle and duty, the possessor of strong common sense, the healthy and hardy human nature whom God assists with graces trenchant and electric, suited to his own high-toned and unbending disposition? He must learn to let his more gentle brother have his own way. He may look upon certain practices of outward devotion as mere food for babes, and not strong meat for men. So far he is right in choosing for himself, but if he shows contempt and intolerance for his neighbor he is wrong—he sins. Let him choose what is good for his own use in all freedom, but let him leave to others the same liberty of choosing their

own means to reach the end which is the common object of all.

The emotional and imaginative ones must not put forward their pet virtue, or their pet devotion, as a substitute for all religion, and a certain cure for all moral evils, and the hard-headed thinker must not despise those who cannot open themselves a way by the keen edge of pure reason, but are obliged to consult the cravings of a nature, perhaps narrower, perhaps broader, than his own.

## CHAPTER IX.

## PROVIDENCE.

WE are lost in wonder when we contemplate the power of God, the Creator of all the bright and beautiful worlds that roll around us in the immensity of space ; and we less frequently pause to remember that the same power is put forth at every instant of time by Divine Providence to preserve the universe which He created. His wise foresight and His loving care are required for the preservation of each and every object in the world, however great or small it may be, from the flaming planet in the blue depths above down to the little pebble at the bottom of the rivulet, and the grain of sand in the plain of the desert, or on the shore of the ocean.

The plan according to which this world

is governed was approved and adopted by Divine Wisdom, at the very beginning of time. This plan was a full and complete system, not making every thing perfect in itself, nor even the best that was possible under the circumstances, but ordering each thing wisely and well, as a means towards the end for which all things were made. Such is the idea of the general Providence of God.

But very often our view of Providence loses sight of the general order and harmony to which all things will converge in the end. We ask in our prayers for a special arrangement which may suit our own peculiar conditions, and when we fail to obtain this we complain, perhaps, that Providence has forgotten us, and lost sight of our case altogether. Our petitions imply a wish that God would not govern the world and the things therein according to a code doing justice to all, but that He would work a series of miracles suspending the

laws He has made, and causing all the world to stop, like the Sun at the bidding of Josue, that we may be served and have our necessities, real or imaginary, consulted to our own satisfaction.

We are informed, more or less, of the laws of health, of social contentment and domestic economy, and yet, when we wantonly break them, we wish the Lord to interpose and free us by special Providential arrangement from the consequences of our obstinacy and folly.

The prayers which we offer in such cases do us some good, no doubt, but they benefit us by obtaining for us some grace or favor entirely different from what we have sought to secure.

The world would surely fall into a state of great confusion were our prayers to be heard as we frame them. For so capricious and changeable are we, that what we ask for as a great blessing to-day, we should look upon as a heavy infliction to-

morrow ; and what we consider in the morning as a severe punishment, we find out before night to have been only a heavenly favor disguised as an earthly trial. Would it not be wise so to engage in prayer that it may lead us to trust our welfare to God, who orders all things for the best, and seek to bring our will into a state of uniformity with His will, and resignation to His all-wise decrees? The sober and ripe Christian mind will placidly admit that it is indeed the wiser and better course to conform ourselves to the will of God, rather than worry and fret because He will not conform His will to ours.

Let no just assertion of the supremacy of general Providence discourage the faithful believer. Without working a miracle, God may grant in many cases the favor we ask. A physician may be enabled to think of the remedy that will cure his patient, a confessor may be assisted in counselling the course that will prevent



great grief and save his penitent from suffering and sin, and a moral maxim, seemingly obvious and simple in its character, being suggested at the right moment, may bring about consequences as important as a miracle would be in the physical order.

Our heavenly Father is always able and willing to help us: we are never wrong when we pray to Him, but we are often egregiously wrong when we attempt to set limits to His action, or to control the ways of His inscrutable wisdom and power.

## CHAPTER X.

## FEAR OF GOD.

THERE is a fear of the Lord which leads us to revere and love Him as children love and revere an honored and noble father, and there is a fear which makes us feel towards Him as slaves feel towards a powerful but unkind master, or as a dog feels in the presence of a harsh and cruel owner. Child-like fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and slavish fear is the beginning of folly.

There is a test by which the true quality of the fear of God may be detected, and its true nature known. The fear which does not exclude confidence, but which allows us to rely upon God precisely because His power and majesty are so great, is a useful and a wholesome fear. It draws us nearer

to God. The fear which produces in the heart a morbid terror of Divine vengeance, which chills our trust in Him, and inclines us to look upon His power as naturally unfriendly and exacting, is a false and an injurious fear. It leads us away from God.

The fear is not a wise one which makes a Christian resort to every excuse, and make every effort in his power, that he may avoid approaching the sacraments, although the counsels of a good director urge him to receive them with humble hope and confiding simplicity of heart. We do God no honor when we flee from His presence as if he were a dangerous and vindictive enemy in place of being a loving and merciful Father. When He is pleased to hold forth to us the proffer of mercy and forgiveness, we are ungrateful and unjust if we turn away frightened at His advance, as though He could only draw near us to smite us with unrelenting severity. He

who made us, fully understands our weakness and our inconstancy, and we render Him a much more acceptable service when we allow His mercy to lift us up and strengthen us, than when we compel His justice, in our hardness of heart, to punish and cast us down.

It frequently happens that nurses, servants, and sometimes ignorant instructors, excite and foster in the minds of young children a superstitious dread of God, that has an injurious effect on them during their whole lifetime, for early impressions are stronger than education and experience in commonplace minds. A child is threatened in a moment of impatience with punishment sudden and swift, even with an awful and violent death, if it dares to lie or steal or disobey. As he begins to reflect, he thinks that such heavy punishment would be uncalled for and unfair, and thus starts in life with a half-formed impression that God is not as just, or, at least, not as for-

giving and patient as a good man, a good woman, or even a good child.

It would be far better to teach the child always to think of God as a gentle and kind Father, to point out the proofs of His loving care in the beauties of nature, and in the comforts and conveniences of social and domestic life, so that every fair and cherished object would remind the young beginner in life of the goodness of Him by whom all things were created. Let the earliest lessons of religion impress strongly upon the unbiased heart of youth the maxim that God is always merciful and beneficent to the good, and then it will be time enough to explain without harshness, exaggeration, or superstitious terrors, that He is also the upright judge of the wicked and ungrateful.

When religion is made to assume a terrific and threatening aspect, the excuse is made, that it is only for the purpose of frightening the listener into good behavior.

We might adopt this system if it were not inconsistent with truth, and if experience did not teach us that men are generally made neither wiser nor worthier by being frightened. There is only one kind of fear that makes better men and better Christians of us, and that is the fear of sin because it offends God, who is deserving of all the love of every heart which He has created.



## CHAPTER XI.

## HUMAN RESPECT.

It is a severe trial to feel that we are under the censure of our neighbors, especially when we do what is right and what should win their applause. This trial is often heightened as other trials are by the workings of the imagination, which makes us over-sensitive and prone to take offence. Men are in numberless cases better, or less wicked than they seem. He who disparages you in one place will often do you justice in another, or if he blames you in his words he will praise you in his thoughts. He may repeat the idle and unfounded accusations of other persons against you, and yet acquit you in the presence of his own conscience.

The words of men may be suggested by

the prevailing fashion or folly of the day. Men quickly imitate each other by casting censure or ridicule upon their neighbor in thoughtless or flippant expressions. But ignorance and malice, even among men of the world, cannot have their sway unchecked. There is a spoken public opinion which we become acquainted with by listening to what people say when they are not earnest, thoughtful, or sincere. There is also an unspoken and secret opinion, not public but general nevertheless, and it is that which rules the minds and hearts of men, when they think and judge for themselves in moments of calm reflection. There lies an appeal from the hasty words of the former kind of judgment, to the sober thought of the latter.

Our Master has warned us that the judgments of the world are not the judgments of God. This establishes the right of a Christian to appeal from the unjust judgment of man to the just judgment of Eter-

nal Wisdom. The judgment of man unjust and untrue must fail, and the judgment of God must triumph.

He who is permitted to suffer from the attacks of calumny and misrepresentation, leans against a wall of granite when he can say with fulness of trust: The Lord is my Judge!

Whom shall we fear and obey—God or man? Better to die than sacrifice principle from cowardly fear of the opinion of a thoughtless and fickle world!

The just man is prudent in his dealings with his fellow-men even in reference to their impressions and opinions. In their presence he is not a coward, nor yet is he rash or foolhardy. He fears not the censure of the world, but he does not wantonly provoke it. He is not virtuous for the sake of its good opinion, but he does not needlessly injure or expose his good name, and the cause of virtue with which it is connected. If by doing his duty he happens

to win the approval of his fellow-men, he makes use of the respect he has secured in the service of honor and truth. If he is treated with harshness, contempt, or ridicule, he bides his opportunity, well knowing that in the course of time even those who are unmistakably wicked, will not fail to give due credit to unaffected goodness and well-established integrity.

## CHAPTER XII.

## OBEDIENCE.

WHEN inanimate or unreasoning creatures are said to obey, it is a figure of speech, comparing them to intelligent beings. Thus we say figuratively that the plants and the trees obey, that the waves of the sea in their motion, and the stars of heaven in their revolutions, obey the law of their Creator. Involuntary obedience is improperly called obedience at all. To obey on the part of an intelligent being, is to know the law and willingly comply with it when known.

No law is ever obeyed which has not been reasoned on. The reasoning may have been brief, the work of an instant, but the fact that we know that the law is a law, proves that our reason has acted and

come to the conclusion that it is right to obey.

Children and persons who are agitated by religious scruples, by doubt and indecision, are wisely told to yield blind obedience to their superiors ; and we read that many of the saints of God professed to obey blindly and without examination, the commands of legitimate authority. But even in these cases the obedience is not unreasoning. There is no immediate investigation into the justice or injustice of the special command, but he who thus obeys, has satisfied himself, by a previous or remote examination, that his superior is really his superior ; that it is God's will he should obey ; that, finally, he is in no danger of doing wrong by being obedient.

The very person who is most perfectly obedient would be the last one to listen willingly to any human authority commanding him to break the law of God. He is fully convinced that he is under proper



guidance, and with love and entire trust he obeys, as a child obeys a noble and affectionate parent, or as a soldier obeys a gallant and admired officer who calls for followers in some dangerous assault upon the works of the enemy. It is indeed possible that easy and affectionate compliance with the will of every one in authority may go too far and lead to the abuse of power, but the opposite excess of stubborn and captious resistance to law and authority is much more likely to occur, and is the more injurious to individual souls and to the community.

Obedience, in its noblest and highest sense, is the submission of man to his God. In all cases of rightful obedience, no matter what may be the law or who the person administering it, we can say with truth, that we yield compliance only because it is the will of God that we should do so. The superior, whether civil or ecclesiastical, has no authority over his fellow-man unless

in so far as God gives it to him. When he speaks in the name of God, he has the right to command and it is our duty to obey. When he speaks without divine authority, then there is on our part no duty to obey, because there is on his part no right to command.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## HUMAN SUFFERING.

OUR Divine Master bade us trust in God in all the wants and trials of life, being well assured that He who feeds the birds of the air and clothes in more than regal beauty the lilies of the field, will not fail to remember us in our need. Steady faith in the power of God to help us and filial trust in His willingness to do so, are the main sources of Christian consolation for the afflicted. Yet they who suffer have temptations peculiar to themselves, and are beset at times by the whisperings of an insidious voice, which seeks to weaken their faith at the very seasons when it needs to be strongest.

They are led to think that hunger, poverty, sickness, deformity, want of success,

and all the physical evils and inconveniences of life are sufferings from which God grants relief; why then did He not save us from them altogether? This is precisely what God did in the beginning. Man from his creation was gifted with entire immunity from physical inconvenience, not in virtue of any right of his own nature but by the mercy of God. Had he not become a sinner he would not have become a sufferer. But could not our Heavenly Father have saved man from physical suffering even after his sin? He could have done so, doubtless, by bringing the punishment to bear upon man in some other relation, by punishing the soul in place of the body. But would man be any better off had God stricken him with a sentence of spiritual death, as he did the angels immediately after their sin? Certainly not, for then his punishment would have been eternal and not temporal as it is now. And would man have gained any thing had God pun-

ished him by degrading his soul to the level of the beasts of the field that perish? Would it have been better for mankind to lose the use of intellect, or of memory, or of free-will, or the immortality of the soul, than health, bodily strength, and beauty, the material advantages of life, and even the life of the body itself? It would have been far worse; for surely the soul of man, created only little less beautiful than the angels, is more precious than the body, which he shares in common with dumb animals and inanimate nature itself. Any penalty, then, degrading or afflicting the body is easier to submit to than an infliction upon the soul. It follows from these reflections that the lightest punishment that could be inflicted upon man for his sin was physical punishment. This is what the Divine Judge meted out to him, when he cursed the field of his labor, and condemned him to death. The ultimate end for which he had been created remained



the same, and although the soul lost many advantages which adorned it while in its state of primeval integrity, yet man was stricken by no curse or penalty pronounced directly against his soul.

Will the question be asked, why did God intrust him with the dangerous gift of free-will, making it possible for him to rush into the commission of the act having all these physical evils for its consequences? Let us endeavor to answer. Because, of free-will on the one hand and immunity from suffering on the other, the former was the nobler and richer gift. The latter would have shielded the body from the ills of life, but the former adorned the soul with a likeness to the Divine nature, a miniature resemblance to the omnipotence of God.

Are we then left to groan under our sufferings, with only a hope of partial assistance to bear the burden, and no positive certainty of entire relief? We answer—



No! Whoever suffers is a witness of God's vigilant mercy. He who atoned for the guilt of the original disobedience, inaugurated a system which will, in course of time, put an end to all penalties brought on by that disobedience.

The work of redemption will, in one sense, be finished only when the last redeemed soul enters into glory. In that day sin and suffering shall be no more for the servants of God. The flesh shall not rebel against the law of the spirit; physical pain shall be unfelt and unknown in the world; and the body, in spite of death, shall be restored to more than its pristine dignity and splendor, becoming impassible and imperishable for all eternity.

It is indeed true that God does not accomplish all this in the hasty manner demanded by our restlessness and impatience. Redemption did not dawn on the morning after sin, nor did immortality for all, immediately follow Redemption. Time passes,

but only time enough to evolve the grace of God, and develop the virtues of which humanity is capable. Time passes, but if we are patient and faithful it will end in an eternity of peace and security.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## MORTIFICATION

THERE is no greatness of soul, or growth in spiritual life without self-control; and mortification is self-denial, or the practice of self-control. He who subdues an appetite or a passion, may do so by sheer dint and purpose of will, or by supernatural assistance; but few are able to curb the pride of bodily impulse without resorting to abstinence, penance, and similar austerities. Even the man of pleasure, and the libertine, must deny themselves and abstain from indulgence under pain of weakness and death. Fasting at times is an indispensable means for preserving or recovering health, and the vigor of the mind, which is weighed down and weakened by excess, is restored to fresh activity by abstinence.

Thus nature herself points out the necessity of mortification and makes provision for its exercise, without reference to spiritual considerations.

It is an effectual means for getting the powers of the mind and will into good working order, and making sure that the nerves of the spirit will be steady and not fail us when the hour comes for action. Religion teaches us to lay hold of so excellent a help when the energy of our being is to be put forth, under the guidance of divine grace.

The highest kind of mortification is that which disciplines the soul, keeping in check our desires, emotions, and inclinations, repressing avarice, curiosity, jealousy, likes and dislikes, vanity, ambition, and all the various impulses and energies, which are very good servants, but very hard masters. The soul which keeps a watch, lest, even in desire, it should allow itself too much freedom and ease, will of

course put down promptly all attempts at rebellion on the part of the animal passions. The works of mortification are simply aids, appliances, and expedients, which outwardly assist and promote the virtue of mortification.

Self-infliction is indifferent of itself, and may be the result of virtue or of ignorance, vanity, hypocrisy, or superstition. As a means towards the end of keeping us in mind of our good resolutions ; of keeping the body subject to the law of the spirit ; of removing the consequences of past mistakes, or warding them off in future, the works of mortification are sensible, useful, and holy. They must be resorted to, however, with discretion and due regard for the health of soul and body. As a further measure of prudence, they had better not be used at all unless under proper direction.

The copying of the austerities alleged to have been practised by some saintly man or woman, must be allowed with great cau-

tion to scrupulous and enthusiastic souls. Were the dispositions and circumstances of the disciple to-day exactly the same as those of the Saint he is striving to imitate, then such imitation might be useful and proper. Until this identity of situation is established, it will be wise to admire, but not always to imitate, the great and holy men of other days in their penitential austerities. The spirit of mortification is a matter of duty and precept; the choice of material performances must be regulated by considerations of time and place, and adopted only under the guidance of wise and saintly counsel.



## CHAPTER XV.

## REGRET AND REPENTANCE.

EVERY temptation is a sophism, for it sets before us the pleasure of sinning in an exaggerated light, and hides the pain in the dim distance, or places it entirely out of sight. Many have driven the tempter back by reflecting upon the miserable feeling of remorse and degradation which they are sure, from experience, will follow the momentary gratification of a sinful act.

When sin has been committed, we may be sorry for it, grieving as the son grieves who feels that he has behaved unworthily and offended a good and noble father; or we may be sorry with that feeling of regret which causes us to be chagrined and indignant only because pride, vainglory, and conceit are called in as mourners over

the fall of self. Nature leads us to regret, but Religion teaches us to repent.

Repentance is a process of reparation by which the sinner turns his fault to advantage. Not stopping to grieve and chafe over his fall, he manfully acknowledges the wrong done, and sets about discovering the causes of his error in the past, so as to avoid committing it in the future. He thus enlists vice in the only service it can render to virtue, making error serve as a warning against itself and an incentive to greater care and watchfulness in the steady performance of duty.

A mind that is feeble will waste the precious hours in worry and vexation of spirit over that which is past beyond recall, but a healthy and resolute character, leaving the dead Past to bury its dead, will gird itself to renewed exertions, and, with God's grace, to new triumphs in the path of honor. There are, indeed, evil consequences and effects of wrong-doing which exist even

long after the evil action has been committed. These unwholesome remnants should be looked after and removed from the soul, but their baneful influence is to be corrected by honest humility, not by the chafings of wounded pride. Reparation is needed, not regret. The thorns and weeds which overspread the garden of the sluggard will be rooted out by increased energy and earnest labor, not by idle complaints and weak self-accusation. Want of vigilance was the cause of the evil that has come upon the land, and want of promptness and resolution may aggravate the affliction, but cannot diminish or remove it.

Christian Wisdom assists us to learn from every fault we commit, a lesson that leads us to practise the opposite virtue. He who falls must arise promptly and walk more carefully on his journey. It happens at times, by this means, that he who has stumbled and fallen is safer than

he who, having never transgressed, is unacquainted with the danger to which he is exposed, and sins more easily because he is off his guard. Humility and trust in God will preserve the one from falling, and teach the other to rise, without permanent injury to the health of his soul.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

## TEMPTATION.

THERE are two kinds of temptation to evil, one external, the other internal. The first consists of an argument placed before the mind, inviting it to evil, or of an inducement presented to the will, encouraging it to transgression, or of an image raised up before the imagination, alluring it towards what is unholy. Again, it may be flattery insidiously working on our self-esteem, the offer of some good, real or apparent; some object presented to us as pleasant or advantageous; or some solicitation addressed to the passions to have their way, God's holy law to the contrary notwithstanding.

The second kind of temptation, which is nearly always brought on by the first, con-

sists in the inclination rising up within us, to yield and follow the object of enticement placed before our view. It is human weakness moving us to accept the gratification presented to our mind by passion. The mere fact of an object being presented before us is no sin, nor is it a sin to have a feeling favorable to that object, or the inclination to make it our own.

But what is the further history of a temptation? We generally find that it remains in the mind, and begins to excite the lower appetites of our nature. Our minds get excited, confused, darkened; we resist feebly and still more feebly; we dwell on the temptation, and finally we give way to it, that is, we yield our consent to the object proposed. What was only an offer is accepted; what was a suggestion, approved; what was a proposal is ratified as an agreement; what was an exhibition we condemned, is now looked at with pleasure; and what we rejected



with horror, is wilfully embraced and indulged in.

This fatal step from resistance to acceptance is sometimes the work of an instant ; we are surprised into consenting, almost before we are aware of it, and sometimes we are wearied and worn out by the conflict, and we yield with reluctance and shame after hours, or even days, of internal struggle and excitement.

Still, the path of duty is perfectly clear ; one of two things must be done. We must avoid temptation if we can possibly do so, or if we find that this cannot be done, then we must resist to the death, let the consequences be what they may. Our Master taught us to pray that we may not be led into temptation ; but if, unfortunately, we are so led, then we pray that at least we may be delivered from evil.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## GOOD RESOLUTIONS.

PERSONS of gentle and yielding dispositions are startled when they come in contact with a rugged nature and iron will. For there are these giants of humanity who shape their resolves as the furnace and trip-hammer shape masses of metal. They bear down all opposition, compelling weaker spirits into compliance. Yet the power and tenacity of purpose that surprise temperaments of a finer and frailer mould do not belong exclusively to the bold and the great, for even the most unobtrusive persons are capable of it at times. It is a trait of character in men to form their resolutions with fervor and impetuosity, but the milder and quieter spirit of woman comes silently and almost unconsciously

to determinations that are not shaken or altered by the wear and tear of even a whole lifetime. Man is gifted with strength, woman with endurance.

The difficulty for dispositions of average power and perseverance is found, not so much in coming to a resolution of sufficient intensity, but in keeping it for any length of time. The smooth water of an Alpine fountain may be frozen into a mass as hard apparently as glass, but the hot rays of summer soften it until it yields gradually and at length finally melts away altogether. Thus it is often with a resolution formed in the cool seclusion of prayer, when it is exposed to the softening influence of worldly prosperity.

He who forms a resolution shows that his will is strong, and his mind made up *at the time*. But, will it keep its strength when the time is past? That is the question. The poor inebriate who knows from experience his infirmity of purpose, tries

to make his pledge binding by taking a solemn oath, by invoking curses on his head if he is unfaithful. And yet as time rolls on, it is seen very clearly that his outspoken and emphatic declarations were written in the sand, and become the sport of the first idle puff of air, or truant wave of circumstance that happens to pass that way.

The proper method for maintaining the firmness of our promises is to go back to the considerations that made them firm in the beginning. One gets disgusted with sin, and filled with remorse for having committed it, and resolves to break away from it. He has had unpleasant experiences and impressions of sin; he thinks and feels that it can only make him unhappy, a full conviction takes possession of him that he ought to make an end of it, and the will, impelled, excited, and heated by these considerations, registers in heaven a strong determination, with the help of

God, to avoid sin for the future. He must not leave his resolution standing isolated and unsupported. He must cultivate it with the same zeal with which he first planted it. He must foster and cherish it by returning again to the thoughts and feelings that preceded it and helped him to make it strong. He must renew his promise morning and night, and particularly when he feels that it is growing weak, and in danger of being broken. He must surround and protect it with prayer, and avoid all occasions likely to make him forget the happy frame of mind in which he first made it.

If the weakness of human nature causes him to lose sight of his resolve, he must take its very first infraction as the sounding of an alarm to warn him that he is in danger, and that he must keep watch over himself with renewed vigilance. Bad habits take a long time to form, and they cannot be thrown off without exertion.

The good habit which replaces them, can only be formed by a repetition of good acts. Drops of water falling from the roof of a cave, form, in the course of time, a pillar of stalactite, bright and strong to behold. The process, though, of this wonderful formation is slow and barely perceptible. So do single small acts of our will form themselves by repetition into lasting and unshaken habits.

If men could become good by one strong resolve few would be wicked, for all have the desire to be good some time in the course of their lives. But vice can rarely if ever be abandoned, or perfection attained by one sudden effort, any more than heaven can be entered at a single bound.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

## DISCOURAGEMENT.

EVERY man, no matter how exalted his position, or important his work, is apt to feel discouraged at times. All have their seasons of excitement, and their seasons of uninteresting repose. The greatest conqueror of ancient times is said to have wept when he found himself condemned to a period of unusual repose, because there were no more worlds to gain, and many Saints, during a lull of labor, feared they had not done enough to save their own souls, although they had been the instruments, in the hands of God, of the salvation of many thousands of their fellow-men.

He acts wisely who resolutely sets his face against the feeling of discouragement, and goes on cheerfully with his work,

whatever it may be, or wherever it may be placed. Why should you give way to depression? Are you discouraged because you think your work poor and worthless, and your life of little significance or importance? If your tendency to despond arises from this point of view, consider calmly the following suggestions :

1st. The value of your work does not arise from the nature of what you are doing, but from the fact that God wishes it to be done. No task is great or little in itself, but it is great if God appoints it ; little, if done without his appointment.

2d. Do not estimate the value of your work by comparing it with the work of others, but be satisfied with doing even a little, good, if you cannot do more. He whose work you are tempted to consider so much superior to your own, may be assailed by the same temptation, when he considers the work you are doing. You are both engaged in what is necessary and

important. The man who on board a ship takes in the topsails to save the vessel from being driven upon a lee-shore, does no more useful service than he who stops a little leak in the timbers at the bottom of the hold. Both do their duty, and both save the vessel in their own way.

3d. Work which seems obscure and uninteresting, may be as fully important as that which is showy and attractive. There will be this difference, however, between them : that you who have a task that does not bring the attention of the world to bear upon you, will be free from the temptation of pride. Were you exposed to the notice and praise of the world, you might lose your humility, and the reward that cannot be obtained without it.

4th. If the cloud of discouragement that darkens round about you, is a matter of feeling and sentiment, you have it in your power to disperse it by rousing your will to a state of healthy activity, and reso-

lutely discountenancing all gloomy fancies. Courage, O soldier, in the good cause ! The difficulty and the dulness of the present, belong only to the present ; they cannot last ! Remember the glorious combats of the Past, and the light of victory that shone upon their close. Fear not ! they will be repeated in the future, and the season of inactivity will be found to have been a season of repose, during which Providence checked your impetuosity only that you might gather new strength for fresh efforts and fresh successes. Put yourself, then, in true earnest on the side of your work, and fight, not in favor of discouragement, but against it.

5th. If the work you are tempted to despise and make little of, were really contemptible and poor, desponding would not mend matters, but only make them worse. But are you right in setting it down as insignificant and poor ? Are not others who are engaged in the same or similar

tasks, wiser than you, when they go on contentedly without fault-finding, and give their whole attention to the duties of their station in life? May not the work be all right, and the trouble be rather with the workman? Are there not others engaged in the same manner that you are, who do their duty in a less careless and slovenly manner, and who present much more satisfactory results from exactly the same materials? Answer these questions fairly, and if you find that you are to blame, correct the fault, wherever it may be found, and you will at once begin to be happier and more useful.

6th. Finally, do not let familiarity with your duties breed contempt for them. Force yourself up to esteem for your occupations. Do not permit yourself to be wanting in respect for your office, whatever it may be. Be satisfied with even partial success—with introducing even limited reforms—removing small prejudices—laying

up, even slowly, a treasure for the future. For the Christian who makes it a constant study to do all that is required of him, and to do it properly and well, no life is dull, no time is uneventful, and even the most ordinary duties are of high importance.



## CHAPTER XIX.

## ENERGY.

THE want of energy is very readily noticed, and leads us to hold in light esteem a character otherwise adorned with many amiable and estimable qualities. The man of clear views and of wise and beneficent purposes, cannot secure the trust and confidence of others, if he is cold, slow, inactive, undecided, ineffectual—in short, if he is not energetic.

Energy, in connection with spiritual things, can scarcely be described as a single quality or virtue. It is a power which gives vigor to every active virtue, as a general reservoir supplies each pipe and conduit with pure water, gushing forth to slake the thirst of cities and villages, or to freshen field, garden, and valley, and glad-

den the face of nature. It is the strength which is alike in all virtues, in the courage that nobly dares, and in the self-denial that patiently endures. This power is acquired by living in the light of just and wise principles, by faithfulness to divine grace, by *practising the avoidance* of all mean and ignoble actions, and growing daily and hourly in habits of natural virtue and Christian duty. It becomes inherent in the soul, and is possessed even when not put forth strongly in active operations, just as a healthy and thorough man is strong even in repose, and when he gives no outward demonstration of his strength.

It is a common error to mistake mere effort for energy. Where there is real power adequate to the performance of the task in hand, there will be no effort. The strong man will lift a weight easily and even gracefully, while the weak man, who rushes forward and puts forth all his strength, may pant and tug at the burden, but either

fails to accomplish the task or does it only in a strained and awkward manner, showing plainly his want of the requisite power.

There is in connection with every form of bravery a true energy and its counterfeit. Bluster is not courage, rashness is not readiness, doggedness is not fortitude, stupidity is not patience, foolhardiness is not valor, recklessness is not magnanimity, and desperation is not self-devotion.

An officer may seize the right moment to make an impetuous and daring charge, because he is cool and collected, and calculates with reason on a favorable opportunity of breaking the enemy's line. Another may order the same movement at the wrong moment, because he is hot, because his brain is full of blood, because he is blinded by excitement, because he has lost his self-possession, and even, strange to say, because he is driven frantic by fear. The difference between the two men and

the two orders is plain to the most casual observer.

The virtue of zeal is energy applied to the interests of religion, but if this energy becomes ill-regulated or unreflecting, it is true zeal no longer. It may even degenerate into bigotry and intolerance, doing work not for truth and virtue but for error and sin. There is a dignity about all real virtue insuring a repose, which is not among the least of virtue's charms. Energy is not opposed to this calm restfulness; on the contrary, there is no real strength without it. In nature we find that it is the shallow brook that runs foaming and brawling on its way, while the deep and majestic river flows grandly and silently on, imitating the calm of the mighty ocean into which it is soon destined to fall. Mountains, the emblem of massive and abiding strength, present themselves to the eye and to the memory clothed in a mantle of silence, or if visited by the fury of a

storm, it can only ruffle the woods upon their bosom, and whirl about in anger the clouds that gather around their brow.

He who would progress in spiritual life must learn to mistrust that energy which is the result of a lively temperament or momentary excitement, and cultivate assiduously that which is based upon firm conviction and the fortitude of a resolute will, assisted by the grace of God. The former kind flashes up like a fire of straw but dies quickly, leaving behind it a deeper darkness than before, while the latter burns silently and steadily, like the deep and slow heat of molten metal. Energy which is allowed to break out thoughtlessly, is sure to end in mischief to your neighbor and remorse to yourself, while, on the contrary, if it is guided by prudence and charity, it is sure to benefit yourself and others. Judge of your energy by the test of perseverance. If its motives are holy, it will be as steadfast as they are, and not pass away



with the feelings or circumstances which call it into exercise. If it is not inherent and persevering, then it is imperfect as yet and unworthy of trust.

It is an error, however, to confound the power itself with its outward expression. For we may say of energy what has been said of grief, namely, that when it speaks loudly it is only slight, but great and profound when silent. To be useful, it must not be a force which holds us under control, but which we hold under control; it must be a servant, not a master. We shall thus be able at any time to use it judiciously, addressing ourselves to the performance of our duty, without being under the necessity of waiting until we are inspired, or until "we feel like it," or until sentiment or imagination come to the rescue, turning our life-task into holiday, and our bounden duty into a matter of inclination and amusement.



## CHAPTER XX.

## SCHOOLING OF THE IMAGINATION.

THE beautiful faculty of the Imagination when it has been properly trained, is a perpetual well-spring of delight to the soul, but when foully or improperly trained, is a source of constant uneasiness. Its functions are mixed up with all our joys and all our miseries.

The words Fancy and Imagination are often used as if they meant the same thing ; but in order to be clearly understood in our remarks, we shall speak of Fancy as the faculty by which the mind forms images or representations of things at pleasure. Fancy is the painter of the soul. Imagination has an ampler mission, and does more than mirror outside objects to the soul. It takes up the conceptions we have formed and improves on them ; arranges them in

novel combinations; and, from the exact delineation or portrait of things transcribed through the senses and retained by memory, it works up new ideas, broader, higher, brighter, or darker, than those found to exist in nature. Imagination is the poet of the soul.

It is easy to see how the power of imagination may be made to serve religion. It recounts the history of the birth, life, passion, and death of our Lord, and of the mission of His Apostles, but arrayed in all the charms of lively imagery, and places them before us as living and active beings, preaching and teaching in town and hamlet, doing good to all, and our meditation becomes a lifelike picture, in place of a dull recollection of dry facts. We hear songs, and the flutter of many wings at Bethlehem, and see the light streaming from heaven upon the face of the new-born Saviour. We look out over the blue waters of the Lake of Genesareth, and see the quaint lit-

the bark of Peter as it lay near the shore, when Jesus preached to the people from its side, or as it flew before the wind, when the sea waxed wroth and a great storm arose, He meanwhile sleeping and they fearing they would perish. With the aid of this wonderful faculty we see Him before us in the hour of His triumph, surrounded by the multitudes singing, "Hosanna to the Son of David," and in that sad day of His final sorrow, when the same voices swelled the fearful cry: "Crucify Him, Crucify Him."

And yet this Imagination, that when properly guided becomes a ministering angel among the other faculties of the soul, may be betrayed into the service of passion, and lead into abject slavery the most gifted and beautiful souls.

He who has no rule for holding his Imagination in check, will find his truant thoughts resist every attempt at bringing them down to steady application. If he

has indulged habitually in improper desires, unbecoming reminiscences, loose reading, and the favorite pastime of idle youth, which is known as building castles in the air, he will find it very difficult to direct his attention to any thing serious. His prayers will be full of distractions; his attempts at study a broken, wearisome, and unsuccessful labor; his efforts to meditate or think upon any grave subject, a mere wandering revery, more like the dream of a sick man than the deliberate self-communing of a sane one. His past sins will come up again to tempt him; the very occasions on which he resisted the tempter will repeat the spell of their fascination upon him; and not only will he suffer from the annoyance of irrelevant and disturbing ideas, but his mind will be overrun by images of its own creating, dangerous to dwell upon, and difficult to repel. A diseased imagination is a serious drawback both to mental and spiritual culture.

As another instance of such evil effects, let us consider this power, as it is frequently found, guiding the conduct of woman. We express surprise every day when an intelligent and gifted woman makes choice of some man for a companion who is utterly unworthy and unfit for her, and perhaps only too likely to make her unhappy. The power of Imagination explains the false step made. A woman who has but limited experience of the world builds up an ideal personage, and easily persuades herself that some one she knows possesses all the perfections with which she has invested her imaginary hero. The person she admires may be irreclaimably vile, but when called on to examine his character, she thinks only of the brilliant ideal which has taken possession of her mind. She hurries events to their crisis—she marries—and lives or dies one more example of the folly of hasty and inconsiderate marriages.

I have said elsewhere that, in judging of



character, woman's instinct is to be relied upon in preference to man's judgment. This is certainly not true in the case of a woman who is the prey of a distempered imagination ; for she sees things in a false and distorted light, and, of course, she will so represent them to others. And again, the woman who feeds her mind with fashionable novel-reading, spends her time in the vanities and follies of the world, is unfaithful to her duties, and untrue to her mission, can be but a poor guide or adviser. Taking false views of life, even her generous impulses will mislead her in her actions. Where her feelings are interested she will exaggerate what is true, and gradually learn even to put boldly forward what she knows to be false. Her reason being asleep, her imagination can but dream, and she will be driven about like a ship at sea without rudder or compass.

The delicate female organization is liable to be influenced widely by the power of



Imagination ; but all must endeavor to keep themselves free from the capricious tyranny of a faculty, beautiful and useful when schooled and controlled by the will, but very treacherous and erratic when left to run at large in its own wild way.

## CHAPTER XXI.

## PRIDE AND HUMILITY.

PRIDE is such a deceitful vice that it looks almost like a virtue. The good, even while doing their best to serve God, fall into it unawares, and the world, while it is ashamed of other faults and hides them, rather glories in its Pride and praises those who possess it.

Humility, the favorite virtue of our Master, is the vigilant guardian of all other virtues. Without her fostering care, other useful qualities gradually stretch and loosen the link that binds them to goodness, and become the handmaidens of Passion and self-love. Perfection itself is not safe without Humility, while with it virtuous mediocrity even is nearly always sure to improve, and reach a happy end.

Now the very essence of Humility is Truth, and it is therefore godlike, because God is the Truth. The very core and soul of Pride is falsehood, and Pride is the special sin of the Evil Spirit, who is the father of lies.

He is humble who holds himself in lowly estimation for the reason that he knows himself well, too well to form a lofty estimate of his merits. He holds himself at the true estimate of his worth, neither more nor less. He admits his good traits without vainglory, for he knows that God gave them to him ; and he admits his defects without shame, because he knows that he is human and subject to human weaknesses.

He is proud who conceives an inordinate estimate of his merits, or of the people and things that belong to him. He lies to himself, because he lays claim to advantages and perfections that he does not really possess ; or, if he is truthful in his claims, then he is exaggerated and wide of the mark in

the degree and extent of merit which he falsely believes or affirms to be his own.

Pride, although apparently high-minded and noble, is capable of stooping to very paltry devices in the service of self, and it is never meaner than when it apes the garb and tone of humility. To exclaim "Lord ! Lord !" with much outward solemnity, may seem and sound like prayer, and self-depreciation may seem and sound like humility. But not all those who cry "Lord ! Lord !" shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; and not all those who speak against self shall avoid the hell of pride. He who, to seem humble, denies the possession of some good trait which he knows he possesses, denies the truth, and there can be no humility where there is no truth. The truly humble man speaks rarely of himself or his belongings, either in praise or in blame.

There is a false humility which injures a man, and prevents his doing manly and

healthful work, by inspiring him with a morbid fear of his own weakness, and by making him shrink from responsibilities which it is clearly a matter of duty to meet bravely and without flinching. Cowardice is not humility, and exaggerated fear of failure may be a lowly estimate of personal worth, but it is not a true one when God wishes us to hear and obey. God could not require us to assume a burden too heavy for our strength, and any burden He assigns to us is really light enough for us to carry, with His divine assistance. The Saviour's human will drew back from the bitter chalice of his Passion, but the inspiration it received from the Divine Will within was, to say : "Father ! thy will be done, not mine."

True Humility never prevents the full and effectual use of what talents or skill we may possess. If I am gifted with a turn for music, or drawing, or for oratory, or any other employment of tact or skill, and

if I have had opportunities to cultivate this natural facility, I will have acquired the power to sing, play, draw, or speak. I know the art, and I know that I am able to put this knowledge into practice. I would lie to myself, were I to say that I have not such ability, for to say so would be plainly to contradict my own mind, and to deny what I am sure to be the fact. It will not be, then, humility thus to act. I may acknowledge my proficiency, and yet such acknowledgment need not stamp me as guilty of Pride.

Humility does not degrade or weaken us, and it does not hamper or hinder the free and vigorous use of the faculties of our soul. One who finds himself thus hampered in the discharge of his duty towards his fellow-men, suffers from too much consciousness, nervous excitement, weak health, want of experience, or natural timidity—but true Humility alone, will never confine or belittle him. That virtue which



makes him great before God cannot, if genuine, make him little before man.

True Humility is akin to the modesty which is such a graceful accompaniment to great merit. It lends beauty and radiance to every other virtue, while self-conceit and vain boasting make even rare worth vulgar, and rob it of half its charms. Thus while Vice punishes itself and defeats its own object, Virtue becomes, in one sense, its own reward, for the modest effort to hide its attractions wins for it additional admiration.

## CHAPTER XXII.

## VANITY.

THE difference between Pride and Vanity consists in this, that the former is an extravagant opinion of our own worthiness ; the latter is an inordinate desire that others should share that opinion. When we are proud, we think too much of ourselves ; when we are vain, we want our neighbor to think too much of us. Pride is the melancholy mood, Vanity the playful craziness of self-love run mad. Pride is feared, but scarcely despised by men ; Vanity is treated with ridicule and contempt, for in pride there is always something strong, and in vanity something weak. The workings of pride, too, are above the reach of vulgar natures, but vanity is easily detected, and there is nothing that pleases a

vain creature so much as the opportunity of laughing at another vainer than himself.

It is not wrong nor improper that we should maintain a decent self-respect, and hold a just and true estimate of our powers and capabilities. In like manner, it is not wrong to have a proper deference to the opinion of other men, and a desire to stand well with those among whom we live. The first Christians were advised so to live that they might have a favorable testimony from those who were outside. The desire to please our superiors, neighbors, and friends, is a legitimate stimulus to exertion, and we naturally crave the judgment of bystanders on our performances, so that we may correct our faults, if we have not been entirely successful, or, if successful, we may enjoy the meed of approbation to which we feel that we are honestly entitled.

But if the desire for approbation is not kept within bounds, it runs into vanity,

and becomes a source of weakness and unhappiness in the soul. The mind gradually loses sight of God, and of the great motive which should guide and sanctify all our actions, namely—the love of God and our eternal salvation. We get to live on human applause, and we do not feel the inward peace and satisfaction that spring from a consciousness of having fulfilled our duty in a proper manner. We become jealous of the success of others, envious of the praise awarded them, and angry at our failure to gratify and astonish our new masters. In this manner the eccentric little passion of vainglory is gradually converted into a scourge that chafes and vexes us continually, by falling upon the raw place of excited and uneasy self-conceit. There is perhaps no passion that so often punishes its own folly as vanity. The stronger it grows, the more certainly it is doomed to disappointment.

Vanity is sometimes supposed to be con-

finer to women and children, to classes of persons, in fact, from which we do not expect proofs of lofty principle and dignified self-command. And yet men are very often as vain of their appearance, and of the impression they produce upon others, as woman is of her beauty, her accomplishments, or her jewelry and costly dresses. Men of rare gifts and distinguished ability, are liable to mar their undeniable merit by exhibitions of almost juvenile vanity. It is a strange and yet a true fact, that even men of genius, men destined to live forever in the literary or military annals of their country, have been noted for affectation and self-conceit, for demonstrations, in short, that prove the morbid desire to be noticed, admired, and made much of by their fellow-men. How necessary, then, it must be for persons of ordinary virtue and strength, to guard against the insidious inroads of this dangerous enemy of spiritual improvement.

It is not necessary to run into eccentricity or rudeness, in order to avoid the imputation of vanity. The good Christian is not the man to put on an assumed and forced exterior. He is guileless and unaffected. He is at his ease, because he has nothing to conceal. He does not fear the judgments and opinions of the world, nor does he swerve from the path of duty to win its admiration or applause. At the same time, he does not wantonly brave and insult it, for such conduct would turn men away from virtue, rather than draw them gently to its practice.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

## MODESTY.

WHEN Modesty is the outward expression of heartfelt humility, it is precious to man, and valuable in the sight of God. It is then the composure and discipline of a person who aspires to no lofty honors, preferring that others shall enjoy them, and seeking no prominent place, but occupying quietly and unobtrusively a secondary position, as one best suited to him, and high enough for his deserts.

When sincere and unaffected, modesty conveys a graceful tribute of deference and respect to the merits of others, which charms the eye and wins the heart even of the bold and the proud. True modesty is true humility put into practice. We find that modesty is not the virtue of persons

who are unreflecting and who are easily driven hither and thither by the untutored instincts and hasty impulses of their nature. On the contrary, the man of solid merit and ripe thought, is much more likely to be modest and retiring, than the man of trifling pursuits, of imperfect education, and unmistakable mediocrity.

This does not happen because the great man is ignorant of his great powers, or the good man of his good qualities. It happens because the more we advance in the knowledge of ourselves, and the more we discover of natural gifts and abilities the more fully we understand our entire dependence upon God, and detect our own weakness, inconstancy, and proneness to evil. Man has two tempers, that which is lifted up and purified by the grace of God, and that which is base and corrupt; we cannot learn to appreciate and love the former without being abashed and ashamed of the meanness and littleness of the latter. The

more we learn of the infinite majesty and goodness of God, the more we learn also of the littleness of self.

Mere natural timidity and constitutional bashfulness are not the Christian virtue of modesty. They are not even natural virtues, nor virtues in any sense of the word. For he who is bashful to an overweening and excessive degree is ill at ease in his feelings ; behaves in an awkward and unpolished manner without intending it, perhaps without being aware of it, and disturbs others by his nervousness and want of self-possession.

The disposition to shrink from public notice and remain, under all circumstances, aloof from public affairs whether of Church or State, often passes for modesty, but it may quite easily come into conflict with duty ; for if God wishes us to assume a given responsibility, we are bound to obey Him, and assume it, and we are not by any means free to consult our own ease and

comfort, and shift the burden of service due to God, to our neighbor, or the community at large, on to the shoulders of others. Where modesty is merely assumed for the purpose of pleasing others, or winning their applause by seeming to depreciate ourselves; where it is resorted to as an excuse for laziness and cowardice, it is not virtue but vice, for it has no foundation in truth, and no connection with genuine humility.

There are many kinds of mock modesty which the sincere Christian must guard against, but none more insidious nor more poisonous than that which serves as a mask for pride. This kind is accompanied with bitterness against others and envy of their merits and success. It is easily recognized as a counterfeit of true modesty. The genuine virtue, with all its fair flowers and wholesome fruits, springs from the hidden root of humility and draws its vitality from that source alone.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## PREJUDICE.

THERE are souls gifted with a natural candor that protects them against prejudice, or, if they are influenced for a moment, the prejudice fades rapidly away like a breath from the smooth face of a mirror. Others of inferior polish are affected by every passing impression, as the photographic plate is eaten into by every fugitive ray of light that falls upon its surface. He who wishes to be good and wise will jealously guard his mind against the approaches of prejudice, whether in reference to persons or things.

Nature often gives to susceptible natures a quickness of insight that is, in certain relations, a better guide even than logical deduction. We observe this in women



particularly. They seem to feel with the quickness and unerring certainty of instinct the presence of anybody who should be avoided. A wife's rapid perception is, in many practical matters of social and domestic life, a surer guide than the slower judgment of her husband. But this impressibility of the soul may lead us into wrong conclusions if we persist in adhering to our aversions, in spite of sufficient proof that we are doing our neighbor an injustice. Let instinct serve to put us on our guard, so that we may not be deceived by designing persons, but let us suspend our final judgment until we have taken time to examine more carefully the character of those who come before us. We may not be able to overcome our likes and dislikes, even when formed instantaneously, but we can always avoid being unfair or unchristian even to those who have the misfortune not to attract our sympathy. We cannot expect the world to be peopled with beings



who are acceptable in all things to our tastes, and we must not be severe upon others for what was not originally their fault, and what it is not now, perhaps, in their power to correct.

He who adopts a prejudice as a maxim or rule of conduct, punishes himself for his inconsiderateness. He has taken a falsehood for a truth ; he has set down a fiction for a fact. He will continually commit errors of judgment because he is guided by a false principle from the very start. He may take it into his head to consider a certain class of persons ignorant or vile, but they know for certain that he misjudges them ; and all others who take the trouble to examine the facts of the case know that he is wrong and unjust. Truth has more friends than error ; and all the friends of truth will lose their respect for his wisdom and their belief in his candor.

We are very apt to consider all men wicked who do not share the convictions

of our religious communion. We know that he whom we hold to be a sectarian is in error as far as his opinions go, and we hasten to the conclusion that he is vile in his conduct. If men were strictly logical, such would be the case. But nobody lives by strict logical rule. People are better than their principles, and worse than their principles. There are people who have faith and who have no charity, and others who do charity though they have no faith. We are bound to believe that the acts of sinners are not all sins, for so it has been decreed by the Church.

We rarely take up unfounded prejudices against persons unless we allow some false maxim to guide our judgment. If we understand how far our duty extends, we shall know how to avoid being unjust. Let us not, in a mistaken zeal for the honor of Faith, go so far as to offend against Charity. The man who acts, in our judgment, wrongfully, may be as right as he

knows how to be for the present. He may be honestly determined to do the right as far as he can know and see it. He belongs to himself and to God, not to you ; and when you harshly condemn him because he is acting the Jew or the Heretic, you may be condemning a future Paul or Augustine.

## CHAPTER XXV.

## SOCIAL INTERCHANGE.

THERE are few men of study, possessing clear and practical views, who will not be found willing to acknowledge that they have learned fully as much from conversation as from books. The great founders of philosophical schools in ancient Greece and Rome, trusted mainly to oral instruction for imparting their learning to those who came to be their disciples. A book bodies forth whatever ideas it contains in a steady unimpassioned manner to the eye of the reader, and has the disadvantage of treating the subject under consideration in general terms, without the power of adapting its explanation to the particular wants of the learner.

But how different is an explanation re-

ceived from the lips of one whom we esteem and love, who knows perfectly well how far we understand the subject, and in what particular points we are still in doubt and confusion, and who, patiently suiting his illustrations to our wants, places before us in living and breathing words the truth which we are seeking to master !

There is a further advantage in conversation beyond that of hearing another talk, and it consists in this: that we hear ourselves talk, and we thus draw from our mind and explain, perforce, in clear and intelligible language, the difficulty that very often is solved as soon as it is distinctly stated.

We are enabled to clear up and understand more accurately that which we already know, and the activity of a mind accustomed to thought will carry our knowledge still further in advance, and make us see things that we did not see distinctly until we were encouraged to put



our crude and imperfect reflections into words and phrases clear and forcible enough to be understood by another. The man who pours forth the vitality and vigor of his mind through his pen, must end after a certain period of time, by laying down his jaded instrument in utter physical weariness. But who ever grows weary or even less fresh and inventive, when engaged in social interchange with learned and virtuous friends, particularly, if among bright and healthy scenes, amid the broad fields, the laughing flowers, the brown forests of nature's open domain, or afloat upon the rippling waters, or again among the glorious green hills, where fresh and pure breezes fan the weary temples of the professional man, and the overworked scholar escaped from the smoke, the wealth, and the noise of the metropolis?

It is on occasions like these that one feels the inward wish : O ! to sit and listen among such surroundings to Plato, the Pagan sage



with a Christian soul ; to Jerome, the terse, elegant scholar ; to Augustine, the affluent and eloquent doctor ; to Thomas of Aquin, the exact and trenchant master, who not only refuted error but made it contemptible ; or to amiable St. Francis de Sales, whom no one could look upon without loving him. O ! for an hour with that blessed man, small in stature, a giant in energy, Vincent de Paul, the apostle of charity ! What a rare delight it would be if we could hear him talk ! He charmed the king, the court, the camp, the clergy, the schools, the cities, the towns of France. He charmed equally ladies, wits, poets, politicians, sick patients, abandoned women, galley-slaves, and children of every age and size. O ! for the eloquence of such a tongue ; O ! for the secret of its power, the effects of which time seems unable to impair or destroy.

A truce, however, to these fond aspirations, which arise so naturally in the heart

of a devout Catholic. God chooses His own instruments, and does His work at His own time in His own wise way. Had we lived in the middle ages, or in the days of chivalry, it might have been our duty to serve Him in a coat of mail and with a long sword. Let us do our best now to render the homage we owe to Him, in accordance with the spirit of our age, and in the manner best calculated to impress favorably the neighbors among whom we live. Our tongue is sacred ; let it never be used in any way unworthy of our Christian profession.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## FAULTS OF CONVERSATION.

CONVERSATION has been flowing down through the ages of time like a broad stream, bearing along with it the knowledge, wit, errors, and follies of the human race. It has supplied materials for thousands of books, and as books have made their appearance, it has absorbed their chief points, making them known to millions beside their readers. Occasionally a master mind will leave its impress on conversation, giving it some quaint form of expression, some proverbial utterance, some simple comparison, or striking popular illustration, which people do not attempt to change, because it seems to say what all wish to express, so much better than any one is able to express it. In this

manner we all use, perhaps without knowing it, many phrases from the Bible, and many sayings of Shakspeare's.

The mission of Conversation, embracing as it does, the whole interchange of ideas between men, is of such universal and high importance, that the moralist cannot but grieve over its many short-comings, and the wrong purposes to which it is turned. As the river that flows through a large city serves as a receptacle for all the refuse matter of every dwelling, so conversation serves to receive all the vile, unjust, and unwholesome thoughts and imaginings of every mind. Reputations and good names go down in its broad tide as the remains of the dead and the drowned are concealed beyond detection in the dark-flowing waters of the river. General intercourse gives security and additional confidence to those who would not dare to unfold their malice, and vent their spleen while discoursing with one respectable person alone.

Gossip is the bane of conversation, for it is the name under which injustice makes her entrance into society. There is an element in the breast of the most civilized communities, even in times of great refinement, that explains how man may, under certain circumstances, become a cannibal. It is exhibited in the turns our humor takes in conversation. We are not ill-natured, nor disposed to lay a straw in the way of any one who has not injured us, and yet when spurred on by the stimulus of talking and being talked to, we can bring ourselves to mimic, revile, and misrepresent others, traduce and destroy their good name, reveal their secrets, and proclaim their faults; and all this merely to follow the lead of others, or for the sake of appearing facetious and amusing, or for the purpose of building up ourselves by running down those whom in our hearts we know and believe to be better than we are.



Now what one poor author can do to remedy this great evil, I am anxious to do, yet I feel that I must not attempt too much. I therefore say nothing about irreligious or indecent talk, but seize merely upon gossip as a principal corrupter of pleasant and rational conversation, and I seek to enlist my readers against its bold and injurious advances. Why does it abuse the absent ; why does it go on as though licensed to consider that they are always in the wrong ? It gives forth its ill-natured sayings, and repeats its rash judgments, and amuses itself at the expense of the absent, because they can offer no defence or resistance.

Would it speak as it does of an absent lady if she were present, if her husband, her son, her lover were within hearing to resent the aspersion thus cast upon her fair name ? Certainly not.

But as the gossip attacks the absent because the absent cannot defend himself or herself, shall not we, dear readers, form a so-



ciety to assist the weak and the persecuted? Shall we not enter into a compact to defend those who cannot defend themselves? Let us answer as a love of fair play suggests. If we are at all influenced by regard for Christian charity, let us remember that it takes two to carry on a conversation against our neighbor, and that if our visitor is guilty of being a gossip, a false witness, or a detractor, we are also guilty by consenting to officiate as listeners.

It is very old-fashioned, and very much of a truism for you to say to your gossiping visitor: "Well, every one has his faults," or "we are all liable to make mistakes;" but you will act much better stopping uncharitable talk by repeating these homely maxims of morality, than allowing your friends during a morning call to destroy the character of some absent person with whom you are both acquainted.

You need not of course be over scrupulous, or morbidly fastidious in this regard.

If any man or woman publicly and boldly violate the proprieties of life and society, you may talk about them ; you have the right to do so. You may condemn their course so as to deter others from following an improper or illegal example.

But when your own friends are spoken of you must stand by them. They have their faults doubtless as you have, but your parlor must not be made a free ground to hold them up to derision and contempt. Protect their good name if it can be done ; give them the benefit of an honest intention, if it is not impossible, and if you positively think that they are really bad people, have nothing to do with them, and do not allow their affairs to be talked about in your house.

In a word, dear Christian reader, where you find conversation to be conducted in a kind, charitable, and refined manner, take your part in it, for it will improve you both in mind and in heart ; where you find

that it is not so conducted, try to correct its want of charity, and if you cannot succeed, then you will do well to cultivate silence, and the companionship of your own thoughts.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## TESTS OF CHARACTER.

SOME persons are by nature and instinct good judges of character, without being able to give any definite rules by which they arrive at their judgments. They seem to *feel* the presence or absence of given qualities in the persons with whom they come in contact, as fine organizations feel dampness or dryness, and excess or defect of oxygen in the atmosphere. Nevertheless there are some rules that hold good in studying human nature, and may assist us in arriving at a correct estimate of the merits and demerits of the characters which we are trying to understand.

When we find consistency in a man, we find a trait that renders a less gifted person more satisfactory to deal with, than one

with even far greater advantages. It is high praise to say especially of a superior, that, go to him when you may, you will find him always the same. Fickleness, on the contrary, disturbs and discourages you, and defeats all your calculations. The fickle person may have luminous qualities, but they are like the sun overcast by clouds and fogs, bright and genial at one moment and hidden away out of sight at the next. Let each one reflect how unsatisfactory and disagreeable he finds it to deal with a character which is influenced by humor, fancy, or nervous irritability, and endeavor to spare his neighbor the like infliction.

There are two traits that are the objects of universal admiration, that no one can help esteeming very highly, firmness on the one hand and amiability on the other. We look up to the man of firm and tried virtue, and we feel that we can put our trust in him without danger of deception.

He is the man we would choose for a leader, under whose guidance we feel that we could accomplish great things for a good and noble cause. But when we meet one who is pleasing in conversation, gentle and refined in manner, incapable of giving pain to another without feeling it with double poignancy himself, affable and obliging, anxious to make all around him cheerful and happy even at the expense of inconvenience to himself, he wins us in another way, drawing to himself our love and affection even before our reason has had time to weigh his virtues or faults.

Either of these natures seemingly opposed to each other conquers our unfeigned regard, but perhaps no character is so attractive or so sure to make friends as that in which we find these apparently opposite traits united. There is something piquant and unexpected in such a union, and as our esteem and affection are both appealed



to, we grow strongly attached to a person thus variously gifted.

There are persons who affect to despise gentleness as weakness, and simplicity as ignorance, and yet experience teaches us that great men, and even great military commanders, gifted with lion-like energy and bravery when engaged in action, are gentle and undemonstrative in private life ; and genuine simplicity is far more frequently the accompaniment of genius than of mediocrity.

There is a certain kindness in many persons of broad sympathies which pervades their whole nature, as sunlight pervades clear water. They never begin by suspecting any thing wrong ; their first impulse is to give aid whenever it is asked, and take trouble in behalf of any one represented to be in want. They love children, and children love them, for they recognize them as friends by means of that unaccountable philosophy by which children can always

tell who likes them, and who only pretends to like them. In short, this class of characters love everybody and every thing around them, and thus the sight of any one suffering, fills them with pity and regret.

There is the reverse character to this—hard, suspicious, unsympathetic. Such a person trusts no one without proofs that there is no danger of deception. He does not readily make known his feelings, and if moved, is rather ashamed of it than otherwise. He has few friends, and even when his acts are kind, he takes no pains to make his manner correspond with them. Persons of this nature should cultivate a high and abiding sense of justice, and make that virtue their guide through life. The man who forms the habit of asking himself frequently, “Am I acting justly?” will not be in danger of wronging his fellow-man, even though his instincts should be rather stern than tender, and his manners wanting somewhat in the softer graces which distin-

guish his more humane and large-hearted neighbor.

There are certain vices which alone suffice to mar a man's nature, rendering it almost entirely unproductive of good, and well-nigh insensible to the genial influences of Christianity. Of these I will merely mention Avarice, Cruelty, and Pride.

Avarice, sooner perhaps than any other vice, turns the soft human heart into a stone. It substitutes the worship of the golden calf for that of the true God, and its love of self excludes all consideration for our neighbor. Cruelty, when deliberate and habitual, excludes every trait and quality in our nature, that the grace of God can take hold of, to refine and elevate it. It reduces man to the condition which the inspired writer mentioned as the lowest depth of human depravity, when he reproached the corrupt heathen as being "without affection" for either God or man. Pride teaches man, in his blindness, to glory in

what debases him, and to be ashamed only of his good qualities. Like the poor lunatic, he feels himself a king, because he is crowned with straw ; and while he despises honest poverty, noble exertion, and decent labor, he is not ashamed to resort to falsehood and fraud for the purpose of living on society, and eking out an inglorious existence. Let us endeavor to stifle the earliest manifestations of these chilling and disastrous vices. Let us oppose liberality to avarice, charity to cruelty, and true humility to false pride.

To judge whether a man is addicted or not to certain failings, it is a useful plan to watch the play of his consciousness, which easily betrays him, unless he is very much on his guard. One who hears his pet failings made the subject of conversation, can hardly sit and listen unmoved, but the fact that he is conscious and anxious, shows itself in tortuous and seemingly contradictory ways.

He who volunteers a defence of himself before he is accused, proves that his conscience is guilty, and that he feels a defence necessary.

He who displays unusual readiness to engage in discussing certain indelicate subjects, who manifests curiosity in reference to them, who easily laughs and blushes when they are brought up, gives reason to suspect that he often dwells upon such subjects in his own thoughts.

He who fiercely and unseasonably denounces the weak and the fallen, may do it to ward off suspicion from himself. He does not speak from true and honest zeal, for true and honest zeal is not headlong, but temperate and discreet.

He who inveighs violently against pride, avarice, intemperance, incontinency, neglect of religion, or any other sin, may be all the time endeavoring to screen himself, or to ward off censure which he knows he deserves. This sort of heated and angry



denunciation, gives good ground to suspect that the denouncer is personally concerned in the subject he is talking about, too much concerned, in fact, to be altogether innocent.

Probably the most difficult to reclaim of all transgressors, is a man without truth, and a woman without affection. A man who is habitually and wilfully untrue, has lost all respect for any outward influence that might reclaim him, and he is not likely to be reclaimed by any influence from within, for he has lost all respect for himself. A woman will misstate facts where her feelings are warmly enlisted, but her devotion saves her from selfishness and utter degradation. But you meet a monster in the moral world whenever you happen to come across a man who has no conscience, or a woman who has no heart.



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## TRUTH.

It is a happy moment in a man's life, when he learns to regard Truth not merely as an object of interest or curiosity, but as the broad and strong foundation of the world of intelligence. Until this point is reached, neither the mind nor the heart can make any progress towards wisdom and happiness. Yet the conditions for acquiring this treasure are very simple, for all that is necessary, is to have a sincere esteem for the truth, and to love it as it deserves.

In order to understand what are the motives for holding truth in high esteem, let us begin by trying to form an adequate conception of its greatness. Let us at once get rid of the fallacy that there is more than one truth. God does not teach one truth

and reason another, for God created reason, and could put in its possession no other truth except that known to the Divine mind.

Rational truth is like beautiful scenery, looked down upon from the summit of a lofty mountain, and revealed truth like the same scenery looked up at from the bosom of the valley beneath. In both cases the same work of God is the object of admiration, but as the point of view is different, the same sight is presented under different lights and shades, and with different salient attractions, both in the particular and general effect of the picture. But truth is one ; there are no two or several truths opposed one to the other. It exists of its own right, and in infinite perfection before any adumbration of it can be thrown upon the canvas of the human mind, or any image upon the retina of the human eye. It reigns in the infinite intelligence of the Almighty, and is eternal, unchangeable, necessary, and uni-

versal. But the poorest and most illiterate child of God, who seizes upon a simple ray of truth, just enough it may be to make him believe and hope in his Maker, holds communion with all the immense light and power that satisfy the boundless mind of the Supreme Being himself.

While we are thus trying to form a high and noble estimate of Truth, let us for a moment pause to examine the adversary that would gainsay the excellencies we have attributed to our favorite virtue. This enemy is Error. We know what is the office of Error, namely, to oppose and defeat the Truth when it is able to do so. But with what success? With only the poor success of darkness, the enemy of light, that melts away and vanishes before the earliest beams of the rising sun. It is of the very essence and nature of Truth to be always the same, while Error cannot be constant, but must change with the caprices and preferences of fickle human nature.

There is nothing that the human soul desires more earnestly than truth, and there is no loss under which it suffers more than the loss of truth. We may reduce all reasons for esteeming it to the one fact, that God values it more than any other of His Divine perfections. Eternal Truth is His most beautiful name. There may be on the part of a naturally well-disposed man an occasional exercise of charity, forbearance, or veneration, but there is no lasting virtue without truth, and he who has lost it has lost, or is in imminent danger of losing, honor, integrity, veracity, and trustworthiness, both before God and his fellow-men.

The reasons why we should love truth are, that it is the primary object of the Divine Intelligence, and the fairest object presented to Infinite Love itself. As a consequence, it is the connecting link between every virtue and God. We cannot conceive of any condition of our mind how-

ever sublime, or of our heart however devoted, capable of pleasing God unless pervaded and directed by truth. A sane mind and a sound heart cannot admire or love any object however pleasing otherwise, if the truth is not in it. Truth is the essence of right, goodness, beauty, and strength, in all their unperverted relations, and where truth is not, there is error, corruption, and death.

There are numberless hindrances to the acquisition of truth, which is the health of the soul, just as there are numberless causes of injury to the health of the body. Truth does not come to dwell with those who are wanting in sincerity, generosity, or self-sacrifice. Those who are obstinate, prejudiced, and wrong-headed, will be misled and deceived by vain assumption and shallow pretence, whereas, they would be sure to lay hold on right principles, if they were but fair-minded and docile. Those who will not give to the investiga-



tion of truth the time and the thought that they freely bestow upon other affairs of grave importance, must not complain if their brief and desultory search is barren of results.

Finally, men who give themselves up to the indulgence of their passions cannot seek the truth with success. They are pre-occupied and interested to that extent, that they know themselves to be unfit for researches demanding calm thought and freedom from excitement. Besides, the conscience of a devotee of pleasure warns him that he is wrong in the life he leads; and if he makes light of this plain and common-sense truth, how can he hope to go on and learn further truths that belong to a higher and purer order of sentiment and reflection? It would indeed be difficult, and a rare gift of divine grace.

We conclude by a word of advice to those who have, through God's mercy, already received the truth. Do not conceal it! Do



not mar its work by your ill-judged efforts to help and protect it. Place Truth fairly before men, and she will take care of herself. She is stronger than they are, fear nothing for her. Truth is great, and will prevail ; Error is weak, and sure to fall.

Error is like a figure of plaster that loses its brightness unless carefully guarded indoors. Exposure to the air and the sun chips and cracks it, and rough weather grinds it to powder. But Truth, like a bronze statue, resists the elements for centuries, and suffers only from the dust that darkens its surface, leaving its body sound and uninjured.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

## THE MISSION OF LAYMEN.

THE nations of modern Europe were civilized and taught science and art by the clergy. The Popes civilized the Northmen, who settled down in Italy; the Bishops made France, “as bees make a hive;” Spain, Great Britain, and Germany were led from barbarism to culture by the priesthood, and chiefly by the zeal and learning of the Monastic Orders. In those days the clergy held exclusive possession of the sciences of theology and philosophy, not only, but they alone knew pretty much all that was known of medicine, jurisprudence, and belles-lettres.

Learning of every kind was so identified with the priesthood, that a cleric or clerk, meant indiscriminately a man entitled to

wear the priestly gown or a man who knew how to read, as among the ancient Romans *Vates* meant, interchangeably, a Prophet or a Poet.

But society never stands still. As time rolled on new professions were formed; fighting ceased to be the only occupation of the laity, and knowledge ceased to be the exclusive property of the clergy. One department after another of Art and Science opened its doors to secular youth. The great Universities were built, and their portals were thronged by aspirants for classical and scientific instruction from every part of the world. Many branches of learning, particularly the natural sciences, passed entirely from the hands of the clergy, and gradually our disciples became willing and able in many things to teach their old masters.

In course of time conflicting ideas of Progress and Conservatism, especially in reference to the principles of Government,

separated the old school and the new ; the perilous experiment of dissevering Theology and Philosophy was tried. The ultimate results of this new experiment were seen and felt in the great revulsion of European thought which began in England, overspread more or less the whole Continent, and culminated in what is called, not with entire accuracy, the French Revolution. That fearful storm that left its bloody imprint on every acre of the fair land of France effected great good, we are told, in clearing the foggy atmosphere, and floating away out of sight many old abuses and relics of barbarism. One thing it certainly did effect ; it taught the human race what Philosophy is likely to accomplish, when set entirely free from the guidance and guardianship of Divine Revelation. There is no nation that would be willing to see the experiment tried over again, or think itself benefited by any effort to bring about its repetition.

Society did for a time most effectually rid itself, by a summary process, of its old instructors, the priests. It got rid at the same time of the God whom the priesthood were appointed to represent, and even set up a sensual idol, strangely enough called the Goddess of Reason.

This double riddance did not add to the happiness of society. The sons of the men of 1792 warned by the vain efforts, the ill success, and the unhappiness of their sires, ceased to combat Religion and legitimate Government, however much they might oppose the abuses and the impositions perpetuated by human passion, in the name of both.

There is undoubtedly at the present time an effort being made, a movement going on, which have for their object the reconciliation of the pupils and their old masters, the priesthood and the people—and this effort has for its supporters the majority of all the good men in the world.



That this movement will ultimately prove a success, there can be no doubt, for it has in its favor both truth and justice, and the common sense of all nations. It is equally clear that both the priesthood and the people will gain by establishing between themselves good and permanent understanding.

Society can be self-governing ; it can possess all the polish that study has for its object to impart ; it can enjoy all the benefits of scientific discovery, for its knowledge is not a forbidden fruit. One can be a layman in our day without being an enemy of Religion. Society can be laic without being or becoming, thereby, infidel. As the ruling body we have never asked society not to become enlightened. On the contrary, we taught the laity all they know ; we found them children and we made them men. Perhaps we were timid and chary in intrusting them with all the powers and all the freedom of action to



which they considered themselves entitled in virtue of their newly acquired manly estate. Be this as it may, they have now assumed all such powers, and successfully asserted all such freedom; and, with the blessing of God, whatever estrangement was caused between us by the inauguration of this new state of things has, partially at least, passed away.

Now, then, is the time for us to make a new announcement of duty, and for the laity to listen to it; for it is too clear to admit of doubt or cavil. It is our right and our obligation to remind them that with their extended power and the security of its free exercise, new and sacred duties are laid upon their shoulders by Him from whom cometh all power and all rightful liberty. The Laity have a mission to fulfil in virtue of the exalted position which they now occupy in Christian society. This mission can only be accomplished by the conscientious use of their increased abilities

and efficiency. They must save the world, each his own portion of it, from error not only, but from vice. They must support the teachings of Religion, because it is God's truth. God's truth in revelation will never contradict God's truth in nature. Beginning each by saving himself from the consequences not only of Ignorance, but also of Self-indulgence, he must teach by his example what he teaches by his word. Let him be a free man—free not only from unjust and tyrannical laws, but from ignoble habits; from the fear of the World's malignant opinions; from the seduction and enslavement of the Flesh; from the pride and falsity of the Devil.

All knowledge that does not teach us to save our souls, is worse than useless. All manhood that does not assist us to curb our passions and rise superior to ourselves is a shallow pretence. All wealth, position, and influence that are turned against the needy, the weak, and the deserving

poor, are unworthy of true manhood. When laymen were children it was enough for them to have the virtues that belong to children. Now they are men. On their integrity, honesty, and goodness, is built the State and its Government, whatever may be its political form. The national wealth, commercial enterprise, military renown, and material greatness of a country do not strengthen its foundations, but increase the burden laid upon them. Growing responsibilities must be accompanied by growing virtue, or the country will fall by its own weight.

These few reflections point out the mission of the laity. Public greatness must rest upon private worth, as the outward strength and splendor of a noble building rest upon foundation-stones that lie unseen but solid in their lowly bed.

## CHAPTER XXX.

## RELIGIOUS PROGRESS.

EVERY religious system contains some truth, and is better than no religion. A system containing no truth at all would fail to win the attention and acquiescence of the people to whom it is addressed. Even corrupt systems, if passing for religions, must have some truth to recommend them. They must, furthermore, be some sort of an advance on the creed that preceded them. We are astonished that Mahomedanism should have enlisted so many nations of the East in its train, permitting as it does so much of error, cruelty, and debasing self-indulgence. And yet the Koran was a wonderful improvement on the scanty religious knowledge of the fierce tribes whom it marshalled under the

folds of its victorious banner. It taught them to worship one God, and to practice obedience, faithfulness, frugality, and many other simple virtues of which they were previously ignorant.

Men are constantly changing, not only in their outward habits and occupations, but in their opinions also, and in the views they take of their duties. The most hopeless spiritual disposition of human souls is not that which urges them on restlessly from one error to another, and from one partial truth to another, but that which causes them to sink hopelessly down into apathy and dejection, and to give up inquiry altogether. We may always have hope for the man who values live thought, for he is a live man although a mistaken one, and life tends toward truth. We may not see how he is to get over his blindness and his misguided zeal, but God will bring him through them all in His own good time.



We are very apt to look forth from our fixed seat on the rock, of truth and to blame those who are changing about, tossed by the winds and waves of error first in one direction and then in another. But we do not understand their difficulties. Rest for us is safety, rest for them would be death. While they keep changing it is not certain that they will change for the worse ; there are many chances of their changing for the better.

Let us apply this view of the case not to nations and countries, but to individuals in the society to which we belong. Its members, even though in error, are daily and hourly subject to the influences of the Christian Religion. They know all the principal truths that the Church of God teaches ; they know the Commandments of God as He taught them ; they know the prayers that the Saviour and His Apostles told us to recite ; they see the workings of Charity, and feel the effects of Christian



public opinion. Besides all this, they are often reached and moved by the light and warmth of the Grace that precedes virtuous action, quickening those impulses that are naturally good sufficiently, to elevate the soul to something still higher and better. These things give us ample reason to hope for the gradual progress and ultimate success of very many souls, of all who will not deliberately resist the will of God.

Truth adapts itself to all conditions of men, and the religious life can be lived by every human soul that comes to the knowledge of it. The opportunities for acquiring this knowledge are ample. Every prejudice abandoned is a step forward ; every unkind feeling overcome, every distorted view of history corrected, every particle of information acquired, is a means of grace that may finally lead the docile mind and heart into full possession of the truth as God made it, and revealed it to man.

He who has at heart the interests of re-

ligion, will therefore be much more usefully employed when he helps to develop the germs of truth in his neighbor, than when he blames him for the errors that happen to be mixed up with them.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

## DIFFICULTIES OF LAYMEN.

PERSONS dedicated to the service of God in a religious life, are constantly reminded of their duties by the objects that surround them, and the occupations that engage their attention. Their danger lies in becoming too familiar with holy things. But the layman is not thus reminded of his duty ; his business is in the world and with the world. It requires a strong resolution to keep the interests of religion before his mind. His danger lies in becoming unfamiliar with holy things.

There is a constant struggle going on in the breast of the good Christian layman against the world, which is unceasingly encroaching upon him. He is like a traveller along the snowy paths of the Alps,

who is surrounded by a cold atmosphere, that has the effect of making him drowsy. No matter how resolute may be the efforts of the traveller to throw off the sleepiness that is coming upon him, the fatal influence is still there. Constant resistance is the price of safety, for if he gives way for a single moment he will fall asleep. Onward he must press in spite of heavy eyelids, drooping head, and dragging footsteps—onward, without delay and without rest, under pain of sleep, and sleep for him is certain death. So does the lethargy and forgetfulness of the world overshadow the spirit of the Christian, and few resist its encroachments; they repose in mistaken security, and their sleep is spiritual death.

It seems a strange thing to those who are earnestly devout in the practice of their religion, that so many laymen should find such practice a hardship or a difficulty at all. Let us confine ourselves here to what

is matter of strict obligation, such as private prayer and recollection, according to the spiritual necessities of each, attendance at public worship on the days prescribed by the Church, reasonable frequency in approaching the Sacraments, &c. When these duties are urged as indispensable, even as conditions of living membership in the Church, numberless excuses are heard, some of them contradictory, all of them mean and based on falsehood. One man exclaims that their fulfilment is impossible. He speaks untruly, for God requires impossible things of no one; and he speaks ignorantly, for as he has never fairly tried to fulfil them, he has no experience to bring in evidence.

But he is too busy to attend. It is possible that one may have business or duties of charity, which take up his time to such an extent, as to prevent his attending to certain religious duties at certain times. But no one is always so busy as never to

be able to attend to any of his religious obligations.

Another cannot bring his mind to bear on the subject at the present time, but will attend by and by. Let him then take a little time and make up his mind if he is in earnest. But if he delays month after month and year after year he is only playing a game of deception. As to attending by and by, it is simply the vulgar resource of procrastination, the thief of time, the enemy of noble and earnest exertion, the unthrifty maxim of never doing to-day what can be put off until to-morrow.

Still another has too much respect for the Sacraments, to think of approaching them until after a long and serious preparation. The excuse is only a subterfuge. The Sacraments were instituted for men with all their difficulties around them. Good will and ready obedience is what is wanted, not length of time or preparation. You are not expected to become holy and



then go to the Sacraments, but to go to the Sacraments and thus secure aid for your sanctification.

On hearing the kind of reasoning embraced in these excuses, one cannot help wondering what sort of results a merchant, magistrate, lawyer, physician, artist, literary, or military man would exhibit, if he were to manage his business the way he does his religion. This sort of management would be pretty sure to break a man down in any kind of business, and it is pretty sure to break him down in his Christianity. The world generally absorbs all his faculties and all his energies, and after a while he gives up trying the impossible task of serving two masters ; he follows the crowd, the crowd follows the world, and the world leads them on to forgetfulness, sleep, and death.

We might speak here of the miserable system of offsetting charity and money-giving against the neglect of Christian

duty ; the compromise attempted with conscience, by railing against vices we are not inclined to, as an excuse for indulging in those we have a mind to ; and all those plans of counterbalance and compensation, the use of which presents such a strange chapter in the history of poor human nature. Their object is to help a man to deceive others, and perhaps himself, forgetting, all the while, that he is moving and acting in the presence of the Eternal Judge, who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

We close this chapter with a brief advice to the Christian layman. Call things by their own names, look at them in their true light, and do not pretend to be doing right, when you know you are doing wrong. Put yourself manfully on the side of your duty, and not on the side of the excuse. Plead the cause of Justice and Truth, not of Procrastination and Sloth. With your feet upon paltry excuses, your

eye on the Star of Duty, God by your side, and honesty in your heart, you will go easily and happily on, and the observance that seemed to you difficult and irksome, will become a pleasure and a consolation.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

## RELIGIOUS MATURITY.

THERE is in the religious as in the natural life, a period of childhood and a period of manhood, and we are just as unreasonable when we quarrel with the child for not being a man, as we would be, were we to quarrel with the man for being no longer a child. The seed of faith lies in the bosom of the soul for years unripened and undeveloped, from the time of baptism until the use of reason; and reason herself may be employed for years, from her early dawn until the mind is ripe and strong, before it can fully understand the precious gift placed in its keeping by the mercy of Heaven.

It is a healthy occupation for the child to run at will among the beauties of nature,

and enjoy the innocent pleasure they impart, before the time arrives for attending to duties and occupations of a more serious cast. In like manner those who are young in the faith enjoy while life is still fresh, the beauties and graces of religion, and grow enthusiastic over them as though they were recently discovered. The softened light streaming down from the tinted panes of Cathedral windows, the festive altar with its festoonery of evergreens and flowers and its pyramids of waxen tapers, the long snowy lines of the procession of fair girls moving up the aisle with noiseless footfall to receive Holy Communion for the first time, the great organ pouring forth its anthem along the naves and filling the venerable pile with a swelling tide of sound, the majestic prelate in his robes of office, the noble pulpit orator rising to speak, the ever-welcome Sister of Charity gliding meekly past on her errands of mercy and love—all these living pictures,

and many others of a similar kind, delight the heart of the new convert, and dwell in his memory as precious gifts of heaven to earth.

But these familiar sights and sounds, taken singly and in their outward form, are not religion. So exclaims the faithful old servant, or the elder brother, who is familiar with Church services from his youth, and finds them, however attractive, no longer novel. But although he is indeed correct in his assertion, there can be no doubt that such things draw the hearts of men towards the Church, and thus prepare their heads to be taught her doctrines, and their whole nature to obey her laws.

Men cannot take in at once the whole of Christian life. They begin by getting partial glimpses of truth, by acquiring a sort of half knowledge of facts, by obtaining information in bits and pieces, not placing them even at all times in the right connection with the whole system to which they



properly belong. They are often surprised at finding more, and often disappointed at finding less than their anticipations led them to expect. The ideas which they had hastily concluded to be of primary importance, sink into a subordinate and secondary rank, and other considerations set down perhaps as of little relevancy, are now seen to be of primary importance. This is natural, and to be expected from all learners, no matter what may be the science they are seeking to master.

But gradually the student ripens into a proficient, and finds himself at home with the subject of his study. His mind becomes organized, and his ideas are arranged in their proper place. Then you find about him a certain repose that was not there before. He loves his science or art, and esteems it as highly as in the days of his youthful enthusiasm, and even more highly, for he now understands it better. His enthusiasm is deeper, although perchance

less outspoken, and less demonstrative, and the excitable tyro settles gracefully into the ripe and quiet scholar.

These considerations will induce the charitably disposed to be careful in judging others who love and follow what is good, even if they follow it rather with the eager steps of untried recruits than with the firm tread of experienced veterans.

Meanwhile, dear reader, it would be well for you occasionally to remember that faith alone, no matter how strong, will not secure the eternal salvation of your soul; and entering into yourself, to examine whether your conduct is that of a Christian, who has had a long course of training in the school of the Redeemer, or whether it is still such as might be expected in a recent convert, but is scarcely satisfactory in one who has had your peculiar graces and advantages for so long a time.

I propose to your attentive consideration four tests, by applying which you shall be

enabled to judge whether your religion is undeveloped and green, or ripe and mellow like the fruit of autumn.

1st. When you are wrong, do you honestly acknowledge the fact, or do you pretend to yourself and to others that you are doing right? There is always hope for him who calls things by their right names, and owns up to the truth, even though it condemns his own actions. He who will not allow others to tell him that he is wrong, and who will force ill-founded excuses on his own conscience, is in a bad way, for he closes up the only two sources from which the truth can flow forth to him and reclaim him.

2d. Do you honestly try to remember, and act on the principle, that the service of God is the end for which you were created, and that all created persons and things are only means towards this end?

The difference between the followers of our Saviour and the followers of the wick-

ed world, consists in this : the former seek God first of all, and the things of this world only in subservience to this seeking, whilst the latter seek the things of this world for their own amusement and advantage, without any reference at all to the will of God. He who does not try to seek God first, and the things of this world afterwards, has not yet learned the first principles of religion.

3d. Do you find that in suffering and sorrow you are led easily to turn to God for strength, and again when successful and happy, does it give you pleasure to remember His goodness and return thanks ?

This is an excellent test to ascertain the condition of your internal life and health. Those who grow hard and obstinate, and who drop their devotional practices when they are in trouble and affliction, are weakly and poorly established in the faith, whilst again those who grow giddy and forgetful of God in every little turn of prosperity, have good reason to fear that they

care more about earth than heaven, more about creatures than the Creator.

4th. Do you find that consolation in your prayers, and practices of religion hold you to God, and that spiritual desolation easily depresses and drives you from Him? If we have firm faith and solid piety, consolation or desolation do not alter us. The good and faithful servant attends to his Master's orders alike, in fine weather and in foul, in sunshine and in shadow.

Apply these tests to your present condition, by answering each question fairly, and you will ascertain how far Religion has purified, strengthened, and elevated your character, and what hopes you may have of rising to the higher path of perfection, towards which even the weakest among us are obliged to aspire.



## CHAPTER XXXIII.

## VALUE OF A SOUL.

WE look forth upon the works of nature, and their grandeur and beauty charm us into silent admiration, or inspire us with a hymn of wonder and praise. The least gifted of men cannot help being warmed into enthusiasm, when he gazes over the bosom of the ocean, or up at the towering peaks of a mountain range, or even upon some old-world landscape, rolled far out like a map before him, adorned by river and lake, vine-land and corn-field, shady forest and laughing meadow, and dotted here and there by the works of man, battle-mented castle, glittering spire, or marble villa, half hidden among trees. But all the grandeur and beauty that surround us are as nothing compared to the majesty of a human soul.



How wonderful is the power of thought! By its means we penetrate the earth beneath our feet, and read the secrets of its dark and silent bosom; we scrutinize the depths of the sea, and study the rules which govern it when it rages in the upheavals of the storm, and when it lies down in motionless calm like a lion taking his rest. We range at will among the planets and suns above us, and learn their habitation and their name; we grasp the lightning's fiery wing, and teach it to be the messenger of our thought across the boundless realms of space; we drag out the coal that has lain for centuries in the dark caverns of earth, and force it to yield up its hidden essence to light our dwellings and our thoroughfares; we harness the dangerous vapor-cloud, and compel it to carry our burdens and bear us rapidly along, as the trained steed carries its master whithersoever it may be his pleasure. More wonderful still, is the mind sitting in

judgment upon facts ; comparing cause and effect, good and evil ; watching the deductions of science ; guiding the gradual experience of art, and forming its rules ; sifting truth from falsehood, and studying the perfections of Infinite Being itself. Memory, the obedient handmaid of the mind, is ever ready to scour whole centuries of time gone by, and gathering up their treasures of knowledge to lay them at the feet of the superior faculty. And Will, created not to be a slave, but free forever, stands clothed with power that no mortal energy can crush, and that is respected by God Himself, who made it to His own image and likeness.

Aside from the intrinsic worth of a soul, let us recollect that God Himself values it as the most perfect thing He has created on this earth. Its beauty is a copy of His own infinite perfection. The motive He had for creating it was eternal love ; the object, His own divine glory.

Man being once created, He treated him as a child ; He introduced him to the fellowship of the bright spirits above, and deigned to converse familiarly with him. And when man in his folly threw away by disobedience all the fair and beautiful gifts that God had freely given him, and sullied the purity of his own nature by sin, still his Heavenly Father dealt out to him a merciful measure of punishment, and comforted the unhappy offender with the promise of a future Redeemer.

The only begotten Son of God became a hostage for man to the justice of his Father, and in the fulness of time He redeemed His pledge by paying the ransom of the human race in His own sacred blood. So great was the love of God for man, that when no one else could save him, He gave His own Divine Son to die for his redemption. O ! how precious then in the sight of God must be the value of a human Soul !

How great then must be our folly when

we neglect the interests of so glorious a spirit confided by divine condescension to our keeping; how dark our ingratitude and our perfidy when we deliberately soil its purity with the degrading stains of sin.

Have pity, O Christian, upon thy immortal soul! No king in all his glory has greater reason to be honestly proud than hast thou when thy soul is pure and holy in the sight of God; no culprit ever dealt a fouler blow on his unsuspecting victim than thou dost inflict on thy soul when deliberately consenting to commit a mortal sin.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

## RELIGION OUTSIDE THE CHURCH.

RELIGION inside the Church is a special virtue and a most excellent thing. It springs from the root of sincere faith, and it produces as its fruits attention, devotion, modesty, and recollection. It keeps us in a proper frame of mind to derive profit from our visit to the Church, and makes us feel lighter and happier when we sally forth again from its consecrated portals.

But going to the Church and praying at the foot of its holy Altars is not the end of Religion—it is only one of the divinely appointed means for securing its objects.

If we wish to know whether we are progressing or falling back in the service of God, we must compare our Religion inside the Church with our Religion outside of it.



When we are in Church we exercise the theological virtues, we make acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity. We give expression in public prayer to our sentiments of devotion, and petition for relief in our necessities, and we also indulge in private prayer, although we are in the public place of worship.

We enjoy an abode of peace and a season of rest. But we cannot judge of the qualities of a good soldier in peace, nor of a good mariner in port. The hour of battle is the time to show the courage of the one, and the open sea the place to try the endurance of the other. In like manner, O Christian, thy conduct and bearing outside the Church will put thy religion to the test, and show, let us hope, that thy good resolutions have not been written in water.

To prepare then for the fulfilment of duty in common life, cherish the practice of attending the public worship of the Church. Go to Church by all means.



Distrust the soundness of any one who makes light of stated attendance at the House of God. In His house we are inspired with reverence and veneration, and the general air of devotion around us assists the soul in feeling a lively sense of His Divine Presence. We remember our accountability to Him, bowing down before Him as the author of good, the punisher of evil, the dispenser of life and death, the arbiter of fortune, and the eternal Judge of mankind. For the love of Him we resolve to be true to ourselves and just and charitable to our fellow-man. The moral virtues that regulate the relations passing between man and man are simply consequences and deductions from the theological virtues that regulate the relations passing between man and God.

Let Religion inside the Church, then, be a preparation for Religion outside the Church. He who has been to Church must have learned, if he has learned any

thing, that he has a God to serve and a soul to save. This work, to perform which he was created and placed in the world, cannot be done in Church. It will be faithfully carried on or faithlessly neglected in the midst of business, politics, amusements, and all the various cares and pleasures of this world. Let him who goes to Church remember that he is in the place and at the time when and where he can prepare his soul to meet the temptations and distractions of every day, and get himself in readiness to do his duty, in spite of all inducements to the contrary, from whatever quarter they may come.

When we are in Church, kneeling humbly before the Lord, let us foresee the difficulties we are most likely to encounter; let us entreat Divine Mercy to grant us the graces we require, to prevail in the hour of conflict with the enemies of our souls, and let us fortify ourselves by strong and earnest resolutions to be faithful to our

God, in defiance of any temporal disadvantages that may be thrown across our path.

If we attend the Holy Sacrifice and share in the solemn and public offices of Religion with such dispositions as these, then indeed shall our vocal exercises of devotion not be vain, for they will send us forth into the outside world forewarned and forearmed, fully aware of what dangers we shall have to encounter, and fully informed as to the means for avoiding evil and doing good.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

## TRUE PIETY.

BLESSINGS on the truly pious ! for they are a blessing to the community in which they live. Men busy with the world may lose all taste for the dogmas and the duties which Religion teaches, but they never deny the tribute of admiration and respect to the man or the woman of sincere and unaffected piety.

The most beautiful and fresh of natural flowers may be imitated in paper, feathers, or wax, and so may piety be counterfeited to suit the paltry and selfish ends of the hypocrite and the pretender. But the arts of the spiritual forger only show how precious the genuine virtue must be in the eyes of all men.

If we look at Piety as a principle, it is veneration which fills the mind for God, and

love which fills the heart for His beautiful attributes and most amiable perfections.

If we look at it in practice, it is the applying and the exercising of our thoughts and our affections in obedience to His will, with earnest and tender interest in His service.

Now in yielding our heart and consecrating our energy with solemn attention to the service of the Supreme Being, we set a crown upon every virtue we possess, we direct the whole machinery of our being and the whole vigor of our life towards God as its object, just as the helm guides every part of a ship in motion towards the one great object, the haven of safety and peace.

This faint adumbration of True Piety will show that it is healthy, unaffected, loving, and cheerful; its inner life basking in the smile of that good God whose presence is never lost sight of by the pious soul, and its outward action shedding roundabout



affection, patience, and pity, upon all mankind.

The effect of inward piety upon outer life extends from the actions even to the personal appearance. Accordingly, we find that the poet and the painter never tire of endeavoring to copy the pure and elevated expression of the holy Nun at prayer; the artless peasant girl before a wayside chapel; the matron schooled by long and patient suffering; the venerable monk at his studies; Magdalen the contemplative, in the wilderness, or Stephen the inspired, among the crowd of his persecutors.

The features are not always an infallible index of the life within. Still we can follow safely the instinct that leads us to avoid, as deceptive, the assumption of piety which is accompanied by looks that shadow forth the workings of a stern and bitter spirit, obstinate and arrogant for self, intolerant and uncharitable towards others.



There can be no purer or nobler motive in adopting or performing any action than reverence and love for God, and the desire to do what will please Him. Now this motive is the very essence of piety. With it we are pious, without it we are hypocrites. Guided by it we love God and man, and serve both; without it we are the merest worshippers of self. The imitation of the outward semblance of piety is often in bad taste and out of place; the influence of true Piety is always in order, never offensive, is useful in all things, and fitted to forward and perfect every honest undertaking in which we may be engaged.

There are certain marks by which genuine Piety may be known, and the absence of which may justify us in suspecting that we have before us only the vice of hypocrisy simulating the virtue of piety, or an affectation of the reality,—a mere shadow in place of the solid substance.

True Piety is, in the first place, *intelli-*

*gent.* It must make place for all that concerns the service of God, whether in great things or little. It must not prefer the counsels to the commandments, for that piety is a mockery, which leads one to busy himself in purely devotional acts and observances, neglecting meanwhile what the law of God makes a matter of bounden duty. The commandments of God are of strict obligation, and obedience to His will cannot be preceded, but may indeed be followed, by a holy desire to walk in the path of Christian perfection.

In the second place, our piety must be *simple*. It must seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice. If it is mixed with motives of ambition, self-seeking, or worldly profit, it is of very doubtful character. If, still further, it should be put on for no other reason than to please the world and advance our personal interests, it is sheer hypocrisy.

Finally, it must be *heart-felt*. It must

spring from the interior life, and show itself outwardly from the fulness of the heart. If it seats itself upon the features, and breathes from the lips without being fed by fountains of devotion that lie below the surface, even in the depths of a faithful and loving spirit, it is merely the religion of the Pharisees of old, sufficient only to deceive men but not to please God.

False piety is the slave of outward forms, useless, because not animated by spirit and truth ; real piety is natural, fervent, and free, its light is the beauty of religion, and its practice is the happiness of the just man upon earth.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

## SELF-COMMAND.

WITHOUT the power of self-command no one can be naturally great or supernaturally good. This power does not consist in any one faculty or virtue, but it is the full possession of our soul, and the harmonious use of our energies at the right time and in the right place. Reason calmly points out the proper course of action to be pursued, and the will resolutely follows her directions until the action is completed.

Self-command implies a double office in the ruling powers of the soul. A man may be drawn back from the fulfilment of duty by a sluggish temperament, a lazy disposition, an unwillingness to assume responsibility, by timidity and excessive modesty, or love of his own ease and comfort. In

cases of this kind he must command his energies, rouse himself to action, shake off his lethargy, and force himself into the performance of his duty in spite of his inclination to keep quiet and rest. Or, again, a man may be driven forward by a fiery temper, that urges him to rush into action without forethought or preparation, without using the right and proper means to insure success, without reckoning upon the consequences which may follow from rash behavior and want of precaution. Under these circumstances one must hold his energies in check, control his ardor, and in spite of all impatient suggestions to the contrary, take his time and act with sober prudence and due deliberation. A good steed is not always to be driven according to his animal propensities, but he must be taught, by the use sometimes of the rein and sometimes of the spur, to obey the wishes of his rider.

We cannot divide the human character



into good and bad, as God in the beginning divided light from darkness. Our motives are often mixed up so inextricably that we are even ourselves unable to classify them. The propensities and inclinations of the soul are not evil in themselves; even the appetites of our lower nature have a proper and legitimate use. The honest zeal with which a preacher inveighs against the rampant vices of his time is a human feeling—a passion if you choose to call it so—of the same kind as the anger with which an unfeeling father berates, without just cause, a child or a servant.

But these energies must be subject to reason. They are very good servants but very bad masters. The lion and the tiger in Eden were subject to man, and came at his call with obsequious obedience; but when he lost the privileges of his sinless state, their presence filled him with terror and alarm, and he either fled from them in



abject fear, or was, perhaps, torn to pieces by the savage strength, no longer controlled by the sound of his voice or the glance of his eye.

Dangerous as our passions may be we cannot destroy or extinguish them, any more than we can live in this life by our spiritual nature alone, and throw aside the lower or animal nature.

Religion teaches us to hold our appetites and inclinations subject to the law of our mind, but she does not place before us the impossible task of unmaking our nature, or turning ourselves into different beings from what God has been pleased to make us with His own hands.

The power of self-control may be acquired to a certain extent, by natural strength alone, independent of religious and supernatural influences. We see proofs of this every day, for the hardy sailor ready to spring at any moment from his hammock to his never-ending battle with wind

and wave, the soldier rushing promptly to face the bayonet or the cannon at the word of command, the pugilist and the gymnast leading, for a season at least, the life of an anchorite of the desert : all these are types of character with which most of us are familiar. The Indian warrior is not only trained to habits of temperance, hardihood, and endurance, but he would lower himself in the eyes of his fellow-braves were he to hint that he is suffering from hunger or from thirst, to betray feelings of surprise or curiosity, or to wince under the tortures inflicted upon his person, by the cruel ingenuity of his enemies. These remarkable instances of self-control speak powerfully in favor of the truth, that natural dispositions are not absolutely bad in themselves, and go far to establish the fact, that the godlike image and likeness according to which humanity was made, may be overlaid indeed with sin and shame, but can never be totally effaced.

The virtue required of the Christian is the same in its effects as that which is reached by mere human heroism. But the motives of Christian self-command are of a higher order. We school nature and train her powers to subjection that we may please God, and be ready at any moment to do His bidding. We are supported not only by firm resolves and self reliance, but much more by the grace of God, which in other days led tender virgins to face the wild beasts in the amphitheatre, and innocent children to bow meekly beneath the sword of persecution, and die for the faith of their fathers.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

## ENEMIES.

THERE are two spirits especially opposed to the spirit of our Blessed Redeemer : one is pride that puts love of self in the place of the love of God, the other that hardness and coldness that sacrifices to self all care and consideration for our neighbor. As our enemy is our neighbor, presented to us in the least acceptable or rather the most objectionable form, the question, if we love him or not, is an excellent test by which to determine whether we have or not the true spirit of our Lord.

The world has cried aloud against the command to love our enemy, censuring it as impossible or most difficult at least of fulfilment. Yet those who go to work in the right way, find it far less difficult to

fulfil than might at first be expected. There is a great and glorious motive for resolute action in this matter, and it is that he who forgives his enemy, frees himself by one effort from an odious slavery, and is made happy by the performance of a truly magnanimous action. Leaving aside religious considerations, forgiveness is truer to dignified and refined human nature, than the haughty but ignoble rancor of revenge, contempt, and retaliation.

The man who hates another, may dwell as much as he pleases on his prudence and self-respect, but he cannot help feeling that he is in a false position, and in the power of another. He is disturbed, annoyed, fretted by the memory of his enemy, by every thought that refers to him, by the mere mention of his name. The feeling of contempt is a bondage, for it is a very unpleasant sensation, that one would gladly be rid of. The only way to be free of all the unpleasant influences of a personal



enemy, is to get clear of him as an enemy, and the shortest way to do this is to forgive and forget him as such. If a man were not induced to take this course by Christian motives, it would still be really the best plan that he could be taught by common sense, and the considerations of personal peace and comfort.

We must not mistake what is commanded for what is not. We are not commanded to take to our bosom as a friend, the mean, perhaps treacherous creature who has outraged and insulted us. We are not called upon to approve or indorse, or even to pass by unnoticed the wickedness, ingratitude, and injustice of his behavior. We are not expected to extend to him the personal affection, the tender regard, which we pour forth upon relatives, companions, or congenial spirits.

Our obligation is simply to place the offender, in spite of his demerits, and in spite of our just reasons for indignation at



his evil behavior, on the footing of our fellow-creatures at large, to whom we wish well for the sake of God. We are not commanded to do this to oblige or gratify our enemy, but only to show love and obedience to the Maker of both of us. We may forgive our enemy, and yet have good reason to know that he is an unprincipled and untrustworthy miscreant.

We may, at the instance of official or other duty, take steps to have his crimes legally punished, and yet have no personal rancor against him. It may be even that our feelings of aversion and dislike rise, in spite of ourselves, with a sensation of loathing, at the very appearance of the obnoxious individual, and yet, in spite of this irrepressible physical feeling, we may still be able to say in the cold determination of our will, that we wish him no harm, but that we leave him to God to be dealt with as He pleases ; that if we could injure him we would not do so, in spite of all the un-

pleasant sensations caused by the mere sight of him.

The Saints, in their day, have embraced and kissed their most cruel foes. Such conduct is heroic, and to be forever admired ; but the law that commands us to forgive our enemies, does not make it matter of obligation for all to go so far. In short, you are bound to resolve that your enemy shall receive at your hands the consideration that all God's creatures are entitled to, but you are not bound to put him again on the footing of your friend.

You are bound to act fairly and justly to all men ; to do nothing to them that under like circumstances you would not have done to yourself ; and, in addition to this, you are bound to deal fairly by your enemy, and not to treat him with meanness, injustice, or cruelty, because he happens to be your enemy. Likes and dislikes are movements of feeling that we cannot always control ; but, remembering how much

we stand in need of forgiveness ourselves, we must endeavor to withhold from no fellow-being the common charities that we owe to each other, simply as man to man.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

## TEMPER.

THE very word at the head of this chapter reminds us of an unceasing conflict, in which calm reflection on the one hand labors to preserve harmony among the passions and affections, while on the other hand the heated brain strives to excite and confuse them. We are very apt to excuse acts of irritability and peevishness, by placing them to the account of a hasty temper or a fretful disposition, and we even state that we cannot help ourselves, and that it is not our fault. An excuse of this kind, however, rarely satisfies our conscience. We feel ashamed of ourselves, and whatever may be the exciting cause or immediate occasion of our sin, we are conscious that we are not free from blame.

Some persons are certainly born with weak and irritable nerves, and many more are sick and suffering for want of proper physical training. The hasty passion of these unfortunates, is more of a disease than a moral delinquency, and they stand in need rather of a physician than of a spiritual director, to effect a permanent cure. Others, again, have been allowed to grow up through the period of childhood and adolescence, without moral training or advice, while they were at the same time subjected to numberless arbitrary vexations and inflictions of which they never could see or understand the reason, simply because there was no good reason to see or understand. With others, hastiness of temper has its root in unsubdued pride, impatience of contradiction, or inordinate susceptibility.

We should all be firmly persuaded of the truth, that there is no more certain source of misery to ourselves and those around us



than an undisciplined temper. The soul of the irritable man is a soil in which every weed of vice takes root and flourishes. He is at all times ready to become a victim of moral ailments from confusion and darkness of thought, down to cravings of coarse appetite.

Equanimity of mind, on the contrary, that is, a sweet and uniform temper, prepares one for fulfilling with ease every duty, and acquiring the practice of every choice and beautiful virtue.

Now a person may be born stupid and sluggish enough to be insensible almost to what another of more delicate organization will feel keenly, yet it is nevertheless certain that a calm and easy temper may be acquired by practice and perseverance. He who is born with an amiable and gentle disposition may render it still more beautiful and attractive by the grace of God and the careful following of Christian meekness ; in like manner, one who has inherited



more harshness than sweetness may polish and correct nature by having recourse to the same means. Very often we find a person born with a melodious and flexible voice which art has cultivated to a still higher degree of perfection, and another again, who, under the same patient training, has corrected innumerable defects in a voice originally rough and uncouth, but now true, harmonious, and sweetly pleasant to the listener's ear.

A temper which is easily ruffled renders one a victim of every outward circumstance of a disagreeable kind. His senses become the constant channels of unpleasant impressions. A grating sound or a sudden noise excites the unhappy sufferer, and contradiction drives him to furious anger. His spirit vibrates from elation to depression and back again, thus rendering him happy or unhappy without cause, and exposing him constantly to the effects of sudden and violent reaction.

He is subject to varying moods of feeling and sentiment, to vaporish forebodings of evil, and exaggerated expectations of good: both, perhaps, unprofitable as well as unfounded.

He is liable to fits of despondency and weariness, causing the wine of life to grow stale and flat, and making him wish for his own death. Or again, he is roused to fits of spleen which he vents on innocent persons, visiting upon them the perversity which is purely his own.

His visitors and friends never know how they are to find him, or how to take him when they come into his presence. He is ready, unless humored like a sick child or a mild lunatic, to indulge in unpleasant and injurious outbreaks of scorn and contempt. He is flippant and untruthful in his talk. He forms rash and unjust judgments, hasty likes and dislikes, and is neglectful, inconstant, and ungrateful. Always ready to tax the patience of others,

and never willing to put up with any demands upon his own forbearance, he easily loses his old friends and seldom makes any new ones.

All these circumstances in the outward life of a Christian man go to show that his inward life is weak and sickly, and that he has made no progress in the practice of virtue. The kindness and affability which depend upon mere caprice are poor helps to the soul. Look to your conduct, and acquire more solid virtue, or you will become a nuisance to yourself, and a thorn in the side of every one who has the misfortune to be under your charge. He who does not know how to govern himself, is altogether unfit to govern a family or a community of any kind. The picture presented in this chapter is not a pleasant one, but it shows faithfully the appearance we present to others, if not to ourselves, when we allow our temper to run riot, unchecked by Reason and Religion.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

## THE RULING PASSION.

THE knowledge of a man's ruling passion gives us a key to his character, for it explains why he has acted after a given fashion in the past, and it enables us to form a tolerably accurate forecast of his probable action under given circumstances in the future. And yet, in studying my own character or that of another, I would not confine my investigations to the ruling passion only. We find that human nature inclines us to certain weaknesses when we consider it on its dark side, but then when we look on its bright side we find that it has more facility, or, if you please, less difficulty, in being led towards certain good actions than towards others. Not only the Passions have a ruler and a chief among

them, but every other group of faculties is organized in the same way. We may then talk correctly not only of a man's ruling passion, but also of his ruling virtue, his ruling talent, his ruling taste, his ruling ability, his ruling kindness, his strong point of whatever sort, and in whatever department.

To understand dispositions more thoroughly in this connection, we can compare persons in their fancies and preferences. We find that one has a fondness for flowers and does not enjoy harmony of sounds, and another is devoted to music but is not attracted by sweet odors or varied colors.

Youth and rude health delight in games of strength and agility, while a maturer and graver mind will seek relaxation or excitement in games of calculation or chance. One person finds a high degree of enjoyment in the beauties of nature or of art, while another will walk along for minutes or hours without looking at a tree



or being aware that the walls of the rooms he is traversing are hung with paintings of merit.

Men act in a similar manner as moral agents. One is always ready to see a world of goodness and beauty, in helping the young, the poor, and the simple, while another cannot get over the idea that they are much better off when let alone, and not helped at all. The reserved and taciturn man may be a man of strict justice; the generous man will rob his own family and himself to gratify his prodigal and wasteful disposition, under the plea of charity.

Religion teaches us that all these tendencies and leanings can, by the grace of God, be governed and directed; and I speak of them precisely that my reader may take the view which Religion teaches. Let him calmly survey his natural dispositions and faculties, whether for good or evil. Let him bring all his energy and all the weight and influence of his Religion to put down



the chief rebel in the kingdom of his soul, and force it to keep within the bounds set by reason and morality. Let him watchfully and constantly cherish and bring out the virtues for the practice of which he is best fitted, strengthen them by earnestness and diligence, and he will come at last to perform easily and sweetly what in the beginning required a great effort. He who in the hour of meditation and prayer promises in a general way to be good, and to avoid sin, goes abroad with a vague and general impression which is quickly effaced from the mind by the chafing cares and concerns of life; but he who sets as his task for a particular day the practice of a particular virtue, or the controlling of a particular vicious inclination, has his attention concentrated, his recollection on the alert, his will forewarned, and is likely to carry out the good resolution with which he began the day. It will be his care not merely to avoid faults in general, but to

strike at the root of sin, by laboring to avoid the fault which he commits most frequently, and which is the cause of nearly all his other faults. He will endeavor honestly to practice the virtue that is opposed more directly to his besetting sin, and to imitate the example of those who are most distinguished for their uniform good behavior and cheerful piety.

## CHAPTER XL.

## THE SIN OF OMISSION.

THERE are many well-meaning persons who examine their consciences, and can say with truth that they are not guilty, as far as they can see, of any flagrant transgression against the law of God, nor yet of intentionally unkind behavior towards their neighbor. This class of persons often avoid sin because it is gross and uncomfortable, and, not being actuated by strong passions, if they do commit any faults they are dainty and fashionable ones. In other words, although like the Pharisee of old, they do really avoid the unclean offences of publicans and notorious sinners, they are damned through their arrogance and spiritual pride.

But there is another sort of transgression

of which they rarely think, and which may put to shame the spiritual-minded and even those who suppose that they are walking the higher roads to perfection: it is the sin of Omission.

Let us look over the long vista that stretches forward from the time when we first knew our God, when we first gazed upon the beauty always ancient and always new, and when we first understood that it was folly to expect to be happy unless by serving Him. How great were our unfaithfulness, weakness, and indecision! We tried, it is true, to live up to a certain point according to the law of God, but how wavering and inconstant was the service we paid Him! The faculties of mind and of heart, which He gave us to do His work, remained neglected and unimproved. We were mingled with others whom we loved and admired for their patience in suffering, their sweetness of temper, their large and generous spirit of charity, their freedom

from the petty weaknesses of sex, and from the influence of unfavorable social and domestic surroundings ; but what did we do to emulate them, imitate their virtues, advance ourselves, and be of use to others ? We may know that we were superior to these gentle neighbors in advantages of education, in native force of character, perhaps in the means or appliances for doing good. Why then do we feel so far inferior to them in goodness ? Why do we say that they must be happy, being so good ? thus virtually confessing that we are neither good nor happy. Why should we not do what they do, so as to occupy their position and share their happiness ? We have neglected to cultivate our faculties, to school and bring out our inclinations, propensities, and wishes to do good. Omission ! Omission !

We cannot be as good as our neighbors, we say, for we began under unfavorable auspices, and we have not been cultivated as



they have in doing good. But the truthful Past will remind us of many opportunities when we might have done what was good and what was kind, and we have not done it. Even when our facilities for leading lives of large and warm charity had been neglected, we still had opportunities, acts of benevolence that came to us to be done; poor or unhappy people that were our own, and had no one to recur to but us—why did we neglect them? We never thought, we never felt, we never inquired. Omission! Omission!

Why deceive ourselves, and attempt to enlist our conscience in a conspiracy against truth? Have we not often known and felt that God wished us to take a certain course? We have so known His will, we have so felt our obligation. Why then have we not followed the truth so clearly shown? A star arose in the East, and shed its silver rays upon the path open before you. Christian soul, dear to God, favored by so many



graces, why did you not follow the star which beckoned you to the feet of the newly revealed King in Bethlehem? You did not! Omission! Omission!

But there is more to be said for your bitter but wholesome humiliation. Why have you loitered, when it was your duty to go boldly forward in the performance of duty? You are not to be tried and judged yet by Almighty God—not finally for time and eternity; but on your own fairness and dignity, answer your own conscience. It was your full conviction that some duty should have been performed, or some impediment to good broken through and overcome. Inactive servant, you have failed in your duty; you have proved heedless of your salvation, untrue to yourself, and untrue to God. Why fail to carry out what was so clearly your conviction of right? Omission! Omission!

There are certain conditions in life in which we are more liable than in others to

leave our duty undone. Parents have duties to perform in regard to their children which cannot be neglected, without placing the salvation of both in great danger. Employers must keep a wise and prudent outlook over the young and inexperienced souls confided to their care. In examining the record of the past, we must inquire also into our conduct in this regard, for we shall have to answer for the sins of others as well as our own, if committed through our fault.

Life is a serious and earnest task. To loiter away our time in idleness, is to leave the interests of eternity unprovided for; and to fritter away in vanity the energies that God has given us, is to add the sin of ingratitude to that of disobedience.

## CHAPTER XLI.

## LIMITS OF THOUGHT.

IN the eighteenth century the world rose resolutely against any and every law limiting thought, and man asserted his right to know every thing.

It is to the credit of our Age, that having looked far beyond our masters in many things, and particularly in the natural sciences, we have obtained a glimpse of the interminable fields of knowledge, which still remain to be explored. Our men of learning have grown more modest in extolling the claims and rights of reason.

The plain truth must stand, that reason is finite, and knowledge infinite. That which is to know, is of small capacity, and which is to be known, is bottomless and boundless. The limitation is on the part

of reason, not on the part of the object of its study. When an archer shoots an arrow into open space, it travels upward for a time, and falls when its force is spent. There is still ample space to be traversed, but the momentum of the arrow is spent, and it can go no farther. In like manner, there are limits to our thought, which stops when it has done its utmost, because man is powerless to go on, not because knowledge forbids his advance.

Religion is in one sense a science, for it is the study of the Divine nature and attributes, and what is true of other sciences is true also of this. There is no mathematician who has exhausted the science of mathematics so as to preclude all further discovery on the part of others ; there is no astronomer who has known all the astronomy that ever will or can be known ; there is no philosopher who has spoken the last word of information that philosophy can furnish to human intelligence ; and in

religious learning it is not impossible that a man may yet arise who will see beyond the ken of Thomas Aquinas or Augustine. But the most gifted of all intellects, even when admitted to the company of angels and receiving the full noonday light of heaven itself, will still have before them an infinite ocean of knowledge which they can never plumb to its uttermost depth, nor traverse to its farthest reach.

For these reasons, any one pretending to know every thing deserves to be laughed at as presumptuous and ignorant. And yet men are tempted to think that it would be but fair if a full explanation were given them of every fact they are called upon to believe. They would reduce faith to figures; they demand the cause and effect and their relations; the why and the wherefore of every thing. Modern systems of Religion discard mysteries and miracles, and virtually justify a man in refusing to believe every thing that he does not under-



stand. He reads in his Bible little else besides a succession of mysteries and miracles which, in virtue of his profession, he must accept as true facts, though he does not understand them ; and yet, practically, his faith refuses to advance unless Reason has gone before and stamped the testimony of God with the approval of human wisdom.

In spite of the tendency of our nature to rebel against submission to authority, let us calmly acknowledge our true position. It is simply this: We can possess no knowledge without mysteries, and we can have no organized rule without miracles.

The mystery is that which lies beyond the verge of all that we are able to learn and understand with our limited capacity. It is that portion of knowledge which is not embraced by our understandings. We find mysteries in the lowest and plainest systems of Nature around us. We cannot take up a handful of earth without having



before us more than our knowledge can fully explain. If we raise our eyes to the heavens above us, we see just enough of the glory of God's creation to teach us that there are countless leagues of space which we have not seen, and countless stars and suns rolling in it, of which we only know that they exist. And if man returns to himself, and lays his hand upon his own breast or lifts it to his brow, he is in the presence of mysteries still more wonderful—those of his own nature.

The union of a pure spirit with a material body is a mysterious fact, the existence of which is proved by every thought and action of his life, and is yet only partially explained by his wisest and profoundest studies.

The world is governed by a series of laws framed for the purpose by the will of God. But there is no rule without an exception, where that which is ruled is created. In a created kingdom there will

always be an ordinary and usual routine of existence, and extraordinary and unusual contingencies. The same Providence rules under all circumstances, but we are only accustomed to its general routine ; we style its exceptional dispensations incredible, and deny them, because we cannot understand and explain them.

And yet in the history of our own lives there have been moments of extraordinary energy, when either mind or heart rose far above their ordinary strength, and achieved triumphs never to be forgotten. In the history of the bodily health of men, there are moments when life is preserved or death kept off, by causes that no common rule can account for. There are extraordinary impressions, flashes of knowledge, presentiments of good or evil, impulses of aversion or attraction, and phenomena of insight, emotion, and sympathetic suffering, that no experience can explain or define. There are developments in nature

around us, sometimes sublimely beautiful, sometimes monstrous and appalling; and there are exhibitions of firm tenacity and explosive strength, that go by no ordinary law, and are subject to no ordinary calculation.

These arguments of analogy and induction are not meant to oppose the old maxim, that "God, who made the laws of nature, can suspend them or dispense from their operation." On the contrary, they only strengthen and confirm what has been truly said by the wisdom of antiquity. They go to show man that even inside of the circle of God's providence in the natural order, there are countless things that he must admit as facts, although his reason cannot explain them. He is thus warned against seeking to fathom infinite truth with his limited understanding, or to set bounds with his feeble will to the power of the Almighty.

## CHAPTER XLII.

## LIMITS OF ACTION.

THE question of what limits of his action a true and free man may submit to, furnishes a beautiful and interesting subject for our consideration. God has certainly the right to prescribe a boundary which human activity shall overleap at its peril. Man has been created a free moral agent, he is told not to eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree; he may eat thereof if he so chooses, but he must take the consequences, and the consequences are sorrow and death.

Religion requires nothing impossible or unnatural of the will of man, in placing limits which he must work up to, or which he must not pass. He cannot be true to religion if false to his own nature, nor true

to his own nature if false to religion. His powers are so constituted and balanced in reference to each other, that there is only one true way for him to act when he is called upon to adopt or reject any given course of action. His understanding must examine the objects which come up for adoption or rejection. It examines also the motives why one of these objects shall be preferred to others, and the results that are likely to follow from adopting or forbearing to adopt it. The judgment pronounces what is the proper course to pursue, and then the will decides the case, and chooses the wisest and best of the different courses proposed. The mind thus passes through three stages of activity—first, deliberation ; second, judgment ; third, choice.

The moral law comes in simply to confirm by its sentence the propriety of this course. It is sinned against by whomsoever will allow no deliberation on the part



of reason of the objects proposed for his choice, and of their relative value, or no fair and impartial decision on the part of his judgment, or who, finally, will not listen to a reasonable and sensible judgment, but follows the blind dictates of passion, and seeing the right still pursues the wrong.

But the will of man haughtily asserts its freedom, and tramples under foot all wise suggestions, so that will stands for reason. He who positively refuses to hearken to reason lowers himself to the level of the beast of the field. He denies allegiance to truth, and madly embraces error in its stead. Conscience is the religious good sense of the soul, and reason is nothing but Conscience outside of moral subjects. The votary of Passion is disobedient to the law of nature as well as to that of revelation. He disgraces the noble gift of freedom, which makes him like unto God, and uses his power to overstep all proper limits of



action, only to his own shame and debasement.

This pernicious course is frequently the result not of malice aforethought, but of indecision of character, unsteadiness, want of serious consideration, and the habit of yielding to the last adviser that will be willing to save us the trouble of thinking, and take the responsibility of what we do by approving of it beforehand.

Religion comes to the aid of man under these circumstances, to help his will and rescue it from the consequences of its weakness and want of resolution. It unveils to the temporizing and the yielding soul the face of a justly angry and offended Lord who condemns its want of firmness. It revives the moral maxims of our better days, and terrifies the listless and the wavering with the stinging reproofs of a betrayed Conscience. It points out the rewards held in reserve for those who unflinchingly do their duty, and the punish-

ments doomed against those who prefer their ease and comfort to the performance of well-known duty. The infirm of purpose require a schooling which they have not received in their earlier days—namely, the schooling of the Will. Let them learn to act on sound principles and to transfer some of the vigor of these principles into their poor drooping wills. Let them be convinced that every attempt to throw off the burden of law, whether it be the natural or revealed law, is sure to punish the offender, and cause him to regret his inconsiderate action. He must then discipline his natural appetites, or he will surely come to grief. If he is religious or reasonable in the sense explained in this chapter, his efforts will end in the same results ; for reason is religion as far as it goes, and religion never goes so far as to contradict reason.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

## BOOKS.

A good book is a good friend. Its gentle voice never forces itself on our unwilling ear ; it never rises to passionate tones of reproach ; it reproves our faults without calling up the painful shame or the swelling resentment that rises so often to resist the living accuser ; it does not desert us in the hour of our need, but is ready to hold intercourse alike with the innocent, the poor, and the fallen.

A good book cannot offer us the balm of warm sympathy that flows from living soul to living soul, but its calm thought and its mute language can soothe and comfort us in affliction, steal our attention gently away from irritating and saddening topics, soften our anger, lay our passions

to rest, and impart to us the most precious gift, next to God's blessing, namely, peace of mind.

Yes! a good book is a good friend. Inattention and neglect do not deprive us of the information or advice it may have to give; and when we return to hold commune with it, after ingratitude and forgetfulness, we are received as kindly as he who at the last interchange bedewed its pages with tears, and followed its counsels with implicit reliance.

History presents us with many instances of great men who read or heard, perhaps casually, from a book, a thought or maxim that became the ruling principle of their whole lives. They had often, perhaps, heard similar advice uttered by their friends, or the principle involved had come up in their own thoughts without producing any deep or lasting impression.

Books which treat of spiritual matters, and have for their object to enlighten and

guide the soul, are to be used with certain precautions, especially by those who are under the influence of ignorance, doubt, scrupulosity, or any undue religious excitement. A few practical hints touching this important subject will not be out of place, particularly for the classes of persons alluded to. I shall write them down not in the hope that all may suit the case of every reader, but that one or two of them may throw some light on his path and help him to think.

1. A spiritual book may do very good service to your neighbor, and may not suit you. Do not, then, take his author for your guide, unless you are sure that your neighbor's case and your own are exactly the same.

2. You are sure that it is the will of God that you should be guided by the advice of your Director; you are not sure that it is His will that you should be guided by your reading of any spiritual treatise.



3. A book speaks to hundreds, or perhaps thousands, while your Director speaks to you personally, on your own special case.

4. A work written to instruct religious souls in the way of perfection, may or may not be useful to the beginner in the service of God. Again, a work written to rouse the sinner from the lethargy of mortal sin, may, under certain circumstances, be useful to a soul which is being trained in the ways of perfection, or the reading of it may have a disturbing and injurious effect.

5. Even a Saint may have written what suited his age, country, and people, and what, nevertheless, may not suit you, because you are of an age, a country, and a people, for which he did not write. The medicine is good, but the fact that he prescribed it for one patient, does not prove that he would prescribe it for another under entirely different circumstances.

6. Any book that renders you singular



and eccentric, that disturbs and discourages you, that stimulates and whets your curiosity, that makes you dissatisfied, unhappy, and restless, is, in nine cases out of ten, useless or injurious to your spiritual welfare.

7. Books of private devotion, or such as set forth rules for confraternities, organized charities, stated prayers, fasts, and observances, always presuppose the strict and faithful observance of the commandments of God and of the Church, and the earnest discharge of the duties of your state in life. Without such strict and faithful observance, all the advice this class of books give you, can lead to nothing.

8. Handle with caution all religious works that deal in sensations, startling assertions, visions, revelations, and miracles of modern date.

9. Lay aside books of religious controversy, if you discover in them a spirit of bitterness, if they deal in personalities, or

in angry, contemptuous, and uncharitable language.

10. It is not the quantity of matter you read that will do you any good. A book is useful if it fixes its thoughts clearly in your mind, and still more so if it teaches you to think correctly for yourself. Otherwise your reading may occupy and entertain you for the moment, but will lead to no useful results.

These are a few hints to prevent your making mistakes in the use of pious books. For further guidance, consult your common sense, your enlightened conscience, and the paternal counsels of your wise Director.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

## EDUCATION.

THE subject of Education is one which humbles, puzzles, and often saddens any large-hearted man, who loves his fellow-men, and who seeks to make them happier and better than they are. We cannot help thinking, when we are first brought into contact with misery and vice, that if we enlighten the intellect of the poor and faulty, refine their tastes, open their eyes to the softening and love-inspiring influence of the beautiful nature which surrounds them, and enrich their understandings with a knowledge of the sublime teachings of Religion,—we cannot help thinking that they must and will become good citizens, good neighbors, and well-conducted men and women. And yet, when we have suc-

ceeded in carrying out all our theories, we are reduced to the sad necessity of acknowledging that intellectual culture alone does not produce the plenary fruits which we desire. When we break down ignorance, we do well, but we have then overthrown the outworks only of the dreary fortress of vice, and much more remains to be done before we can be satisfied with the people for whom we are working.

Far be it from me, as a Catholic moralist, to have any quarrel with scientific culture. I am perfectly willing to confess, that merely intellectual religious culture, viz. : the purely theoretical knowledge of the principles of Religion and their history, is not apt to regenerate man and society, any more than the purely scientific culture of the human understanding. What is required, beyond mere intellectual culture, whether scientific or religious, is moral education—the culture of the heart of beings who act fifty times oftener under

the impulse of feeling than they do at the suggestion of cool thought.

Man has a mind that lays before him rules of decorum, propriety, and moral action, but he has also a hot and violent will, which propels him forward to sudden and rash action. If you educate his mind only, you teach him how to think, but if you wish to teach him how to act, you must also educate his will ; you must provide curbs and checks, spurs and incentives, that will be ready at all times, and at a moment's notice, to push him forward when he is inclined to be sluggish and inactive, or to hold him back when he is eager to rush furiously into action.

I hope I have given a clear enough idea of what is meant by moral education. Depend upon it, dry sermons, religious tracts, and psalm-tunes, although useful, it may be, in their place, are not enough to accomplish what is required—that is, to chain the busy demon of passion, ever on



the eve of an outbreak, and to force and drag unwilling and heavy human nature to act according to the high standard of natural justice and Christian purity.

These things being understood, the momentous question arises, who is the proper moral educator of those who, with more or less of scientific education, are to become members of society?

Modern legislation, and social and individual benevolence have put in action many agencies for the purpose of bringing moral education up to the point which scientific education has undeniably attained in modern times. The School has been looked to by many governments for this excellent result, leaving Religion out of the question altogether. Religious denominations have taken up the problem, with a seriousness and sternness of purpose that threw aside the influence of the schoolmaster and the school. Others, again, have opposed education by the State,



and in many parts of the world have united themselves together with great earnestness and generosity, taxing their private means to combine scientific and moral education, and religious training together. The system thus preferred is partial to no education that does not blend religious teaching with all other kinds of training, and make it, in fact, paramount to them all. Theoretically, this would seem to be the safest system. There are persons who criticise it as having some drawbacks and disadvantages, among which they allege these two : 1st, That it either turns lay teachers into teachers of religion, or allows no one to instruct the young in the sciences, unless those whose real business it is to teach religion. 2d, That it isolates the young in special parties, and fails to prepare them for the life they will have to lead, or to accustom them in any way to the companionship of those with whom they have to

be constantly mixed up and associated, immediately after their education is over.

It is not our object to examine systems of education, or to decide on their comparative merits. The point we are anxious to make is, that moral education must be given, if we are to have moral men and women for members of society, for men do not grow in morality naturally and spontaneously as they grow in bulk and weight. In addition, we affirm that the divinely appointed institution for the moral training of youth is not the school, nor the Church, but the Home, the Family. The teacher and the Priest may assist, may teach the teacher and train the trainer, and may do their best to supply the absence of parents in exceptional cases; but, it is much to be feared, that if the father and mother neglect their duty or fail to fulfil it, no other agency, no matter how earnest and willing, will be able to supply their want, unless very imperfectly.

The moral education of a child must begin in the cradle—he must be taught his first lessons in the difference between good and evil before he learns to walk; he must receive certain impressions, and be restrained in certain regards, before he can talk to his teacher or his Priest, or understand them when they talk to him.

There is an unwritten and unspoken catechism which a child must know by heart, before he begins the study of the Catechism of the Church, and unless he has learned the first, there is little chance that he will ever properly learn the second.

Education, in fine, is not the end of life, it is a means towards the end of learning how to live. Educational institutions are useful and well-regulated when they teach a boy or a girl to become a man or a woman, fitted to move in the sphere of life in which they will find themselves when the term of their education is over. Any

system of teaching that unfits one or even does not fit him, to discharge intelligently, worthily, and usefully, the duties of the condition or state in which God has placed him in this world, is evidently defective, and needs either to be reformed, or to be replaced by some other system.\*

\* See Chapter XLIX. and its continuation, where these principles are treated at greater length.

## CHAPTER XLV.

## LAWS OF HEALTH.

THE world reaches our soul through the body, and our soul reaches the world through the body also. If the body is in good health and harmony, the impressions which pass through the senses will be like the rays of light which pass to and fro athwart a pane of pure crystal, but if the body be out of order it will act as cracked or stained glass, distorting and coloring the clear light in its passage back and forth, and conveying false impressions and reports. The body which we wear is given to us by Almighty God, as an instrument for serving Him and saving our souls. We have no right to abuse it, to maim, injure, or defile it; and if we forget this, we not only injure our own happiness, but

we break His law and offend Him. He who disregards the laws of health is sure to suffer in consequence, even perhaps the penalty of death itself.

There are many who, when they labor under acute suffering, or discomfort and weakness which they have brought on themselves by breaking the laws of health, have recourse to supernatural means in the hope of recovery. God can do all things, and by the use of whatever means He pleases. Accordingly, prayer may cure a fever; sacramental strength may cure the body weakened by ignorant or wilful disregard of health; the intercession of the Blessed may repair damages done to the mind through aggravated disorder in the bodily functions; a flow of blood may be healed by touching the hem of the garment of the Perfect One; and chronic infirmity may be driven away by the shadow of the Prince of the Apostles falling upon the withered form of the sufferer. But these



instances are exceptions to the rule, and God has given no man the right to expect them, or to put his hope in their recurrence.

But, leaving miraculous interposition aside, it is both the duty and the interest of all to hold to those agencies which prevent and ward off disease, and keep man sound in body and mind, ready at all times to serve his God and his neighbor. These are temperance in the use of meat and drink, cleanliness of person and apparel, moderation in work and thought, control and subjection of the passions and appetites, avoidance of exhaustion and fatigue, purity of body and soul, and an allowance of sufficient repose.

Religion recognizes the sacredness of the natural laws which God established for the regulation of health. How could she, in fact, neglect or ignore a condition of things so intimately interwoven with the moral order? Body and soul are intimately

united together, and so are their mutual cares and concerns. Venial sin is the sickness of the soul, and mortal sin is its death. Bodily illness is in most cases the result of sin, and in numberless instances sin and ignorance, and all manner of evil dispositions are caused or aggravated by the sufferings of the body, or the wretched conditions of its being.

In accordance with this view, the wisdom of revealed Religion teaches us to practise the corporal works of mercy, while we are mainly intent on fulfilling the spiritual and higher charities. We are taught to visit the sick and relieve their sufferings, if we have the skill or the power to do so. We are sent to the poor, the imprisoned, the naked, the hungry, and taught to clothe their shivering bodies, and give them sustenance and liberty, so as to put them in a fit condition to attend to their duty of serving God and their neighbor.

Again, while the voice of the Church arouses with trumpet tones of alarm the soft and luxurious followers of worldly ease, and bids them do penance and prepare, by fasting and prayer, against the wrath of the judgment to come, she excepts from the observance of her seasons of mortification and penitential austerity, the young, the ailing, the infirm, and those whose labor is of an exhausting character, all, in short, who could not comply with the ordinance unless by endangering their bodily health. Austerities, in fact, which cannot be practised unless by violating the laws of health are pronounced unacceptable in the presence of God.

If it is reprehensible to injure one's health even in so holy a cause, how misguided are those persons who from vanity, or the gratification of the passions and the senses, throw away so precious a gift of God, shortening their days by their own folly! It has been said that the human

anatomy is a hymn of praise to its Creator. We may add that it is jarring and discordant when its harmony is arrested or broken by ill health, and never so full and glorious as when the life-utterance of a sound mind is served and supported by the accompaniment of a sound body.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

## CONSERVATISM AND PROGRESS.

THE present century is remarkable for the great contest which has been waged between these two rival theories, more particularly as men of all parties have endeavored to think and write down their favorite plans before working them out in practice. The contest must go on indefinitely with more or less animation between the advocates of the old and the new, the admirers of the past and the worshippers of the future, the timid and the venturesome, the far-seeing and the unreflecting, the prudent and the thoughtless, the steady supporters of established order, vested rights, and the powers that be, and the seekers for change, reform, and innovation. There is one lesson the man of the

nineteenth century should have learned from the age in which he lives, no matter what side he may espouse, and that is to recognize the fact that there are very many honest, upright, able, and unselfish men in the ranks of the party opposed to his own.

Those men who are intolerant and extreme in this century may claim the credit, such as it is, of starting the fierce and frequent revolutions of our day, but they are rarely found among the workers who bring back peace and security to the body politic. They may have invented and applied the severe measures of repression which silence opposition by stifling it for awhile, but they do not know how to remove the causes of disturbance, or remedy the evils that are justly complained of.

Measures that have for their whole scope and bearing the social or political interests of men are matters of expediency,



having a contingent importance only. They are means towards an end, and though good in themselves they may be useful to-day, and yet cease to be the best that can be done for to-morrow. They are the fruits of human reason, and proper subjects to be discussed by reason for adoption or rejection. Now whether the question be to preserve some institution of this nature or to change it for another supposed to be better, I must be left free to form an honest opinion. By what right does either the opponent or the advocate of change claim from me an unreasoning acquiescence that I owe directly to no one but God? Surely by no right that I am bound to respect. He who is intolerant in reference to measures that depend upon his own judgment alone for their correctness, is pretty sure in enforcing them to defeat the very cause of which he appears himself to be an advocate. What is established by brute force alone is sure to

crumble by its own rottenness, or to fall before long beneath the blows of time.

There is an ugly shape that casts its shadow athwart the most brilliant speculations of the political economist, whether of the old school or the new, viz.: the demon Abuse. How is the leader or his followers to be sure that in seeking to preserve what is old, he may not be preserving what at the same time has outlived its usefulness? Let him who is not yet committed to a party, study the case well in this light, and at all events determine that he will not allow himself to be forced to spend his powers in upholding that which is old only because it is old.

How again can we be sure, without fear of error, that in advocating a change we are not introducing what will simply prove an additional abuse? Let us act calmly and with reflection, and have sense enough at least not to support new things only because they are new.

But as these chapters are dedicated to the service of Religion, the obvious and common-place remarks contained in this one would have no moral or point without the crowning reflection that her interests, consisting as they do of the glory of God and the salvation of souls, are too sacred and solemn to be mixed up rudely with the transitory concerns of secular life. The man who has been trained up in the love and observance of religious principles will be honest and upright in his dealings with his fellow-men, whether in or out of the Church. He will love mankind for the sake of God, and cherish patriotism not as a stepping-stone to selfish aggrandizement, but because it is a Christian virtue.

Any union between politics and Religion beyond this is hurtful to him who seeks to bring it about, and further still, all past experience clearly proves that a man can do his Church no greater injury than by

seeking to identify with her heavenly faith and mission, the petty interests of worldly life and the fleeting questions of the hour.

## CHAPTER XLVII.

## AMUSEMENTS

THE man of the world is guided on the subject of amusements simply by his inclinations ; he indulges in pleasure if he feels like it, and if not he abstains. It is very evident that persons who wish to lead a virtuous life cannot leave so important a matter to be decided by caprice or the humor of the hour. They must have some rule to guide them.

In establishing such a rule we must avoid too much stringency on the one hand, and too much leniency on the other. Those who are too severe especially with the young, looking with an eye of disapprobation even upon their innocent recreations, fail to display the humane and genial spirit of the Gospel of love. Those

again who are careless, and who see no harm in idle pastimes of any kind, expose immortal souls to temptation and serious spiritual danger.

In order to strike the golden mean, we say that no amusement should be encouraged unless it is of a nature to improve those who engage in it. If it is bodily recreation it must improve the body, giving it the advantage of exercise or rest. We naturally connect exercise with the idea of fresh air, grassy fields, the joyous laugh, the ruddy health, and the innocent sports of childhood. What better means than these to ward off the tempter, and sweep from the brain the dark and brooding thoughts that flee before a contented mind and a lively flow of healthful animal spirits? Nothing can be better for this good purpose. Physical training in fact is a necessary part of education, and without it we shall meet but seldom that cheering sight—a sound mind in a sound body.



Where rest is needed, give the worker surcease of toil or of study. The quiet walk by a winding river, the favorite book in a rustic seat under a tree, a visit to some of the kingdoms of nature, and an inspection of the wonderful treasures they contain, and other similar guileless occupations are not idleness, but means for recruiting and restoring powers overtaxed in the performance of duty, and for acquiring strength to take up again and carry buoyantly onward the burden of life.

Any amusement which is recommended as intellectual must be calculated to improve the mental faculties. The book, the play, the conversation, the painting, or the sculpture which should present a snare for the innocent, and suggest by design unbecoming ideas, are no fit or lawful sources of amusement. They do not improve, but corrupt the soul of the unwary beholder.

As a general rule, then, it is the duty of the Christian to condemn and reject any

kind of amusement which is injurious to the health either of the body or of the soul, while he may lawfully patronize and encourage such amusements as have no evil in themselves, and are, on the contrary, conducive to the moral and physical improvement of those who share them.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

## ACTIVE LIFE.

SOME people in this world make their Religion a science, some a romance, some a sentiment, some a torture, some a hobby, some a bugbear, some a vague theory, some a fierce partisan cry, some a cloak for vice, some a pretence to respectability, some a periodical and organized scheme of benevolence, some a bundle of meaningless forms, some a vision of antique story which they love, and some a superstitious remembrance of early impressions which they hate, and would get rid of if they had the daring to do so.

Religion, thank Heaven, is none of these things, and none of these people place it in its true light.

In spite of this, each one of these unfor-

tunate visionaries congratulates himself on his success in making what he calls religion work in as part and parcel of the scheme in which he is interested, or else complains because he cannot force it to subserve the ends he has in view.

One who thinks he will be able to make his fortune if despotism prevails in the land will write, and preach, and work to drill and marshal the Clergy into the service of the successful soldier, who is the tyrant of to-day, and is probably destined to be the popular victim of to-morrow. Another, who wishes to inaugurate the reign of what he calls liberty, promises Mother Church long life and prosperity if she will commit herself to all manner of popular excitements and crude theories, and take the lead in all extreme measures, at the very time when the world stands most in need of repose, charity, and moderation.

Then again comes the theorist with amia-

ble and kind-hearted feelings, but vague and uncertain thoughts, who quarrels with the Church because she will not commit herself in his way to the amelioration of the laboring classes and the suffering poor, and imitate what, according to his view, was the character of her Founder.

There are many enthusiasts who would have the Church throw aside all her Christianity, and limit her mission to a crusade in favor of some one virtue or perfection, that is, according to them, the panacea of all human ills, and the only thing man requires, whether in this life or the life to come.

In our age, and be it said to the credit of our age, few men are idle and most men are very much in earnest! Those who are most in earnest, who are the leading enthusiasts in the community, would wish to see the Church inflamed and spurred on by the special enthusiasm that inflames and spurs on themselves. She advocates and upholds all virtue, and consequently when

the time and the fitting opportunity offers, she speaks in favor of whatever there may be of good in their theory too. Encouraged by this circumstance they would wish to get control of her great motive power, to force the human race into their pet scheme and the good which they suppose its general adoption would infallibly accomplish; and they are disappointed when she fails to be persuaded by what in their view of the case, are unanswerable arguments.

Every one wishes to drag her to subserviency in whatever fancied improvement he may undertake for the public good, and each and all signally fail in bringing about the unnatural alliance.

The mistake made by all these enthusiasts consists in this, that each one supposes the Church ought to take him for her guide, in order that things may be put straight in the world, when in reality the trouble all happens because they will not



take the Church for their guide. Religion has not been established to serve as a public engine of reform, that every dreamer may put in motion to carry out his views, right or wrong. Religion is none of the partial or distorted theories we have been describing.

What is Religion? Religion is a life which we are to lead, and it embraces the quickening spirit within us that makes us live, the laws and conditions which regulate our being, and our actions which are the result. It is an easy and simple thing within reach of all, and beyond the reach of none. It is not a matter of hard study for those who are in earnest. It is truth in action, directing us in prosperity and adversity, turning both our joys and our sorrows to profitable use, going along in us and with us from the cradle to the grave. Whoever has mind and will enough to be honest and in earnest, can obtain the gift of Religion by asking it with all his heart

of Almighty God, who refuses His holy grace to none of His children.

The best way to understand what it is to be a religious person is to begin at once, and live religiously ; to embrace and profess the truth as soon as it is made known to us ; to fulfil earnestly our duty in life as soon as we understand what our duty is.

## CHAPTER XLIX.

## DOMESTIC EDUCATION.

THE systems of literary and scientific education which are daily put forth, and recommended with more or less ability, are all experimental in their character. They are to be taken on trial, and the best that can be said for them is, that they may be an improvement on the past, and will perhaps lead to something less imperfect in the future. Whilst so much is written and said on the subject of education, we are continually reminded that it is a purely human work, in reference to which men's minds are still confused and unsettled in spite of whole centuries of investigation and experience. When we treat of domestic education, we stand on firmer ground, and we ought to be able to reach

conclusions satisfactory to the common sense of everybody. Home is an educational institution prepared for the young by the providence of God Himself, for it is He who established the relations of the family. The school, the teachers, and the scholars, are in this case assigned their respective places by the very law of nature, and not by the wisdom or the caprice of society. The importance of home education, and the vast influence for good or evil which it exercises upon individuals, cannot for a moment be questioned. Adopting the division of our subject which has naturally presented itself, we will begin by making some remarks, in the first place, upon home as the school of domestic education.

It is the oldest of all institutions. It precedes all aggregations of individuals, whether in a social or political point of view, both in the history of mankind and in the life of each man. From it, society receives its recruits, and in its walls dwell

the boy who is the father of the man, and the girl who is the mother of the woman, of later days. The physical man is formed and trained gradually and insensibly in the family, the moral man receives from it the germs at least of his principles, prejudices, and habits ; and although we commonly give the credit of imparting knowledge exclusively to other schools, the greater part of the human race receive all the knowledge they possess in no school but this. Narrow as the foundation may seem, it is upon the family that Church and State, city and nation are built, and without it they would all cease to exist.

God prepared and fitted the two individuals by whom the first household was formed, and from whom the first family sprang. It is the business of the Church and of society to prepare now those who will in time be heads of families. The Church has always paid special attention to this preparation, and has never allowed

any one rashly to assume the sacred obligations of the married state. She has pointed out clearly the impediments which exist to marriage being happy, and has determined the circumstances when they shall act as a bar to the marriage contract, or when they shall at least delay its consummation. She has laid upon her ministers the obligation of seeing that the parties proposing to marry are sufficiently instructed to teach their offspring the chief principles and practices of religion. She commands it to be approached with all the gravity befitting one of her holiest institutions, and with the deliberation proper to a bond which death alone can sever.

Is not much of the want of organization which we daily witness in families a consequence of the haste, levity, irreflection, irreverence, wherewith young people rush into the married state? Are not the feelings of every pastor pained often by the thoughtlessness and improvidence of those



among his people who, in place of submitting with docility to the wise requirements of the Church, seek to push their way disrespectfully to the foot of the altar where irrevocable vows are to be pronounced? Parties are allied together who have had neither time nor fitting opportunity to become acquainted with each other's dispositions; and sometimes avaricious fathers, oftener foolish mothers, insist upon their tastes and prejudices being the rule by which the selection of their children shall be guided in this most important step of their whole lifetime. Among the antecedent causes which give rise to ill-organized households, we must not fail to mention difference of religious belief. We are speaking of home as the school of domestic education. Now, supposing the best dispositions to exist on the part of the teachers, how can religious instruction be imparted by those whose views are radically different on the most important and fundamental principles of

thought and action? The best result that can be hoped for is, that the one party, careless about the true religion or indifferent about all religion, will leave the matter of religious training by word and example entirely in the hands of the other party. But even if this compromise be effected, it leaves the school only half organized ; it institutes a family which is to do its work in an abnormal manner, using only half the resources which it commands when all things are arranged as they should be in the household.

Next to a home which is badly organized, especially in the earlier period of its existence, that home must fail to produce good social results which is slighted and neglected by its members. Absenteeism on the part of landlords has been known to destroy the agricultural vitality of many a fair country, and absenteeism on the part of parents must bring about similar sad results in the home. The father of a

family in our midst is in the habit of going out early in the morning to business which is transacted in a distant part of the city. Frequently, at an hour somewhat later, the mother, having completed her toilet, sallies forth for the better part of the day, which she spends in visiting, shopping, and promenading, while the children at home are left to be taken care of by the servants, or to take care of themselves. The family do not assemble again until late in the evening, and then in no fit condition for social and familiar intercourse. That great domestic institution, the family meal, does not exist; the occupations, amusements, and pursuits of each member being different from those of the others, there is no reciprocal interest, no interchange of advice, no comparing of notes, no mutual confidence, no assistance given or taken. If a move is made on the part of an individual, it is to get off from the dulness of home, and to seek some more congenial

sphere of enjoyment ; and if all stir, it is to hasten away to some scene of public entertainment.

The want of the home-feeling in this country has been frequently remarked, but it does not exist only in the breasts of those pioneers and rovers who take their way, like the Star of Empire, westward, and who will keep on that way until stopped by the waters of the Pacific Ocean. Among the people of our cities and towns as well, want of affection for home is a noticeable feature, and one which bodes no good for the future of society. As home loses its hold upon the hearts especially of the young, it loses its influence upon the formation of character, and ceases to be the school it was originally designed to be. Large numbers of our citizens are gradually getting to have no such thing as a home. They live in hotels and boarding-houses, eat in restaurants and at *tables d'hôte*, send their children to be housed,

fed, reared, and done for, at so much per head, in boarding-schools, and never hear of home, unless it be in some work of kindly fiction, or some ludicrously inappropriate ditty sung at the piano of the hotel parlor. One object of the foregoing remarks is to call attention to what seems to be forgotten by some amongst us, viz., the importance, the necessity we may say, of home education, and the great evil of its omission. We see ways and means and institutions multiplied on every side for the development of man's reasoning powers. But man is not composed of reason alone. He has other faculties which must be trained and developed as well as reason, in view of his future usefulness. He has emotions, tastes, feelings, impulses and biases, likes and dislikes, sympathies and antipathies, which require to be trained and governed, for they are the delicate materials out of which character is formed. He has what old philosophers called the



*concupiscibile* and the *irascibile*—he has a moral as well as an intellectual nature, he has a heart as well as a head. It is the home-school properly regulated that must educate his heart, else it will remain neglected and untrained, or be trained in the wrong direction, for the future misery of the individual himself and of society. The maxims and the practices by which the moral world of man is regulated, cannot be learned from books, or the professor of philosophy. The traditions, the examples, the gentle influences of home, must precede the period when philosophy begins its sterner task; and if the ground be not prepared beforehand, knowledge, reflection, and even experience, come generally too late to produce any useful result.

There are many homes which are but poorly organized, and where the blame cannot be fairly laid upon either head of the family. The man of business, the mechanic, and the daily laborer, are com-



pelled to be absent nearly all day, by the system which has grown up among us, and frequently, by the force of similar circumstances, the household is broken up, and its members scattered, from early morn until a late hour of the night. While such an arrangement may be regretted, it must be accepted, and we, therefore, must be satisfied with doing the best that can be done under the circumstances. But we call upon all to appreciate the importance of domestic education, and the greatness of the evils that must follow from its abuse or neglect. We call upon public instructors of the people to cultivate and cherish what remains in audiences of affection and esteem for home, and not to aid and abet the exaggerated socialistic spirit of the age in destroying the last vestiges of so important an institution. Let parents do what they can towards correcting the evils which must be evident to them in their household, since they themselves are the first to

complain of them. However poor and narrow a home may be, and however humble the objects which fill it, young children love it as their home until they are led by outside influences to neglect it, or to be ashamed of it. Let parents, then, begin early to cultivate home attachments in the breasts of their children. Let them make their dwelling-place agreeable, as far as they have the power to do so, and try all they can to render it interesting to the younger members of the family. We believe that the Puritanical rigor which frowns down any species of amusement and innocent relaxation in many American homes, drives the young men especially to public places of entertainment, where bad associations and vicious habits are formed. It is, therefore, a question for parents to consider, whether they are not in part to blame for the eagerness which their children manifest to go away from home and spend their time in some circle less un-

interesting, if less improving, than the domestic one is, or might be. Do not, we say to all, give up in despair all effort at reform in a point of such vital importance, but begin to effect what good, and remove what evil you can—and to show that you are in earnest, begin at once!

## CHAPTER L.

## DOMESTIC EDUCATION.—CONTINUED.

WE now come to the second division of our subject—the teachers. One of the complaints commonly made by parents of their children who begin to grow up, is, that they will not submit to be controlled by their betters; that they will not mind what is said to them. We hear it frequently said by the goodman of the house, or his wife, that it is harder to bring up children in this country than in any other; and they seem to think that there is something in the American atmosphere that disposes the young prematurely to independence, and even insubordination. While sympathizing with those who are thus afflicted, we must quote the fact as an additional reason why they should be

diligent and faithful in the discharge of their duties, and why they should study every appliance that is likely to aid them in discharging them. There is a time when they have entire control over their children, and when they must attend sedulously to the work of their domestic education, lest it soon become too late to attempt it with success. Do they ever reflect upon the power they exercise over their offspring in early youth? Other legitimate authorities must use constant watchfulness and frequent force to check and hold in subjection the persons whom they are appointed to govern. Society has its police and its prisons for detecting and securing the unreasoning and unruly; royalty has its thousands of bayonets and its hundreds of cannon charged with lead and “villainous saltpetre;” and the Church herself must occasionally resort to spiritual pains and penalties, and invoke even the aid of the secular arm, to curb the



evil-intentioned who are sowing discord, scandal, and immorality, in the midst of her people.

But where is there an authority in the world so absolute on the part of the government, so unquestioned on the part of the subject, as that of parents over their young children? The father may be a poor laborer, illiterate and uncouth, but his little boys look up to him as the greatest and wisest man on the face of the earth. There is nobody else's father that in their estimation knows so much, or can do so many things so well, or is in any respect so great and brave and powerful as their own. He has more authority over his little children than king or president, the latter personages being as yet unknown to the budding citizen. His decisions are of more weight than those of the Supreme Court, for they are received as though absolutely infallible. In the face of danger even the boy who is led by



his father's hand, and assured by his voice that there is nothing to fear, will walk unhesitatingly on, though it be to death itself. For all men under the law of nature, and for individuals even now, the parent is the first priest, and from this source we receive our first distinct ideas of the Godhead, and we learn the first words and rites by which He is honored and worshipped. The young child can see no woman in the world more beautiful, more lovely, more wise in all things, than its mother. Put it in the presence of a queen arrayed in gold and gems, and it will shrink back in terror, and cling for protection to its mother's gown. It never wavers for a moment in its allegiance, it relies implicitly upon her in all things, it trusts in her goodness as unalloyed, and in her power as unbounded. If it is hungry she can feed it, if it is fretful she can soothe it, if it is in danger she can save it, and if it is afflicted by sickness it would turn away

from Benjamin Brodie, Astley Cooper, Galen, or Æsculapius himself, feeling perfectly assured that she can relieve its sufferings, and being only puzzled to make out why she does not do so at once. As for implicit reliance upon her word, it will not only accept what she says as true, but even subscribe to the statements made on delegated authority by nurse or housemaid, even when they assert the rather doubtful fact that the moon is made of green cheese, or that the bug-a-boo eats up little children in the dark. It is at this early period of life that parents must win the respect and confidence of their offspring, and rear them up in the obedience which they wish to be preserved later in life. They have all power in their own hands, and they can mould with ease the character and disposition of their pupils in the Home School. If, through ignorance, they be unfit for this task, or if careless in its execution, they will have no right to

complain later, when they fail to gather where they have not planted, and to reap where they have not sown.

The reciprocal duties of parents and their children are so closely connected, that it is next to impossible for the latter to fulfil their share of the obligation if the former have neglected what is incumbent upon them. Furthermore, the obligations of a parent are so interwoven with all the relations of his life, that he can hardly violate any moral duty habitually without injuring in some manner his children. All men, for instance, are bound by the law of God to avoid wastefulness and prodigality ; but if a parent be guilty of these faults, he sins also against the justice by which he is bound to obtain what is necessary for his children's support, and preserve it for their present and future benefit.

Ignorance on the part of parents is the source of much misery in families. Sometimes it is ignorance of what a parent is

really bound to do, and sometimes it is ignorance of the manner in which to do it. We are very far from requiring the knowledge of letters or science as indispensable. But we insist upon it that a mother must know how to manage the home at the head of which she is placed, and how to form, develop, and strengthen the character of the children she is bringing up. We insist upon it that a father must know the principles of his religion, and be able practically to teach his children how to follow what they command, and avoid what they forbid. Children will manage somehow or other to grow up, physically speaking, for it is but rarely that any one dies of starvation in civilized communities. But we maintain that children will learn neither morals nor manners untaught. Some children are, we know, gifted with angelic dispositions, and take to what is good, and avoid what is evil, from hereditary bias or special favor of Providence. Even these rare specimens of

a better kind of humanity require to be watched over carefully lest they deteriorate and become wicked, as very sweet wine becomes very sour vinegar. But as a general thing, little children are little animals, and their natural tendency is to become worse still as they grow up.

Medea saw the right and approved of it, yet pursued the wrong notwithstanding; these specimens of young humanity are prone to the wrong, and incapable of seeing by themselves why the right should be pursued in preference to the wrong.

There are, to be sure, moral instincts and principles of right implanted in the reason of the child, and there is even, we may add, the gift of faith received in the child's soul at the baptismal font. But we must remember all these good things from above are mixed up like the four elements in chaos; there are as yet no rocks, no bones on which to construct a world; the man exists, but he is earthly and sensuous,



and all his superior qualities are smothered up in a mass of pulp and gristle. If he could speak and act with his present tendencies, he would scorn the idea of preferring what is useful to what is pleasant, or sacrificing present indulgence for future advantage ; he would sell without a sigh a kingly birthright for a mess of papp, and remorselessly barter a noble and famous name for a pewter rattle, or a gingerbread horse. There is good in the child, to be sure, but it requires careful and skilful management on the part of parents to bring it out ; and if they are ignorant of what parents ought to know, they will fail to do it, even with the best intentions.

Ignorance is very far from being the only fault which grieves the Christian philosopher who would make it his study to improve domestic education. There are many parents who neglect their children with an indifference that seems almost incredible. It is easy to notice among a number of boys



at school those who have careful mothers, and those who are neglected. There is a difference even in their countenances ; for while the child of the former class is gentle and attentive, he of the latter has about him a hard or wild look, and a listlessness, or recklessness, that shows conclusively to an attentive observer, how little he expects to be kindly noticed, and how little he cares whether he is noticed or not. Poverty is the excuse brought up in defence of the neglectful mother. But let us once for all understand that poverty is not an excuse for uncleanness of person ; and in so far as clothing is concerned, poverty is a good excuse for patches, but not for rags. Fathers too often do not care for their children, do not want to have them near, or to be annoyed by them. They take no interest in the things in which their children are concerned, they will not talk to them, they will not encourage them to ask for information, and in reply to their questionings they give

simply an ungracious and curt answer, oftener attempting to shut the mouth of the youthful inquirer than to satisfy or enlighten his understanding.

The result of this coarse treatment is, that the boy, seeing that his father will not talk to him, finds out somebody else that will. His amiable parent does not object to his running about the streets, and there falling in with associations which must cause his ruin, and each, perhaps, is rather pleased to be rid of the presence of the other. In every neighborhood there are nooks and corners where boys assemble together and exchange ideas on the subjects which they have at heart.

Not only do the children of the poor thus meet together, but often the better class too gather around some boy who is older perhaps than themselves, or who is at least their superior in the games and exercises which boys are fond of. Outside the city, the place where boys meet, as men do in

clubs and bar-rooms, may be a barn or a shady nook, or a bank by the river-side ; in the city, it is a stable, or the corner of a street, a lumber-yard, a vacant lot, or some sequestered part of the docks and piers. At these gatherings, the boys speak their mind freely, and question and answer each other without reserve, and here frequently those habits are formed, which, when discovered too late by parents, cause so much grief and alarm, namely, swearing, petty gambling, stealing, and all manner of obscenity and corruption.

As a means of preventing these sad results parents, and fathers especially, ought to be as well the friends and companions of their children. They ought to win their confidence, or rather keep the confidence which, without any effort on their part, is in the beginning all their own. They should study the disposition and character of their children as it goes on unfolding day by day under their eye. They should

know where their children spend their time, what company they keep, and how they are occupied and employed throughout the day. It is very easy to get from a boy the history of the day which he has just passed, with his own observations and reflections, and casual remarks upon the nature of things and the character of the companions he has been with. He is always willing to talk of what occupies his own mind, and to receive the views of others thereupon, provided he is only allowed to speak and consider his conversation as not uninteresting to his hearers.

Will any parent object that such a system of domestic education as what is here implied would take up too much of his time and attention? If he does, he little understands the importance of educating his children and preserving them from the early inroads of vice, and realizes but poorly indeed the strict account he will have one day to render of the manner in

which he has discharged this duty, the most serious of all duties aside from the salvation of his own soul.

It has been truly said, that we see the faults of others as if they were before our eyes; and our own as if they were behind our backs. This blindness in many parents would seem to extend beyond their own persons, and to envelop in darkness the faults and the merits, the whole character of their children. Parents are frequently the victims of real or pretended blindness in regard to the faults of their children, and they remain ignorant at times of bad conduct which is known to the whole neighborhood. They will take for granted the statement of daughter or son as to their whereabouts, during long evenings spent away from home, when any one of their acquaintances could tell them the whole truth, much to their grief and consternation.

This blindness frequently amounts to



a misjudgment of the whole character and disposition of children. One child is treated rudely, commanded to hold his tongue when he speaks, punished for the slightest fault or forgetfulness, put out of sight when visitors come to the house, left behind when the family goes out visiting, and, in short, always found to be in the wrong, and never by any lucky chance in the right. This is not unfrequently the very one of the family who possesses most spirit, or talent, or energy, and who only needs a different training to grow up a good and useful member of society. Meanwhile another child is petted, and brought forward on all occasions, and while the other one gets all the cuffs, this one comes in for all the coppers. This one is always protected by one parent against the severity—the well-merited severity, perhaps, of the other—every thing he does is considered beautiful, and every thing he says admirable, and by this means, he who is



praised as a wit at fourteen, grows up to be a dunce at twenty-one.

Nearly all the faults of parents in the management of their children may be summed up in the two extremes of excessive severity and excessive indulgence. The first is fatal to mutual kindness and confidence. There are very few children who may not be made to see the justice of correcting them when they have been wilfully or maliciously in the wrong. But, on the other hand, there is nothing so wounding or so injurious to the young as punishment which they know they have not deserved. If the well-known saying be quoted here by any parent about "sparing the rod and spoiling the child," we will simply remark that no one has a right to quote that saying who uses the rod at the impulse of anger. We have nothing to say against correction properly and judiciously administered—administered, not in a spirit of revenge, but really for the improvement of the offender.

We rather aim our remarks at certain people who are habitually harsh and severe with their children ; who freeze their young hearts, and crush their souls within them by the constant exercise of domestic despotism. There are such hard men in every community, and there are mothers too who, by step-dame rigidity and ceaseless unfairness of treatment, drive their daughters at length to wish they were dead in their graves, in the hope of finding peace there, or perhaps to seek for peace in the home of a stranger.

No less injurious is the fault of excessive indulgence. We have said before that children have appetites and passions which they must be taught to curb and control. They must begin to learn at an early age that self-denial is one of the very first and most indispensable principles of Christianity, and of all true greatness. It is only weakness, or false or foolish affection, that will induce parents to give the young child

its own way in all things. It is their duty to examine carefully what is for the child's true interest, to form a judgment and abide by it, in spite even of remonstrances, whining, and tears. Let every parent remember that a spoiled child is sure to grow up selfish, and therefore heartless, and that no one is more certain of suffering in consequence than the parent by whom the child was spoiled. Flattery is one of the means of spoiling a child, familiarity and want of dignity is another, and a third is that bane of domestic peace, partiality towards one particular child at the expense of the others.

We have spoken thus far of households where the teachers of the domestic school-house are more or less uninformed, inefficient, or faulty, but where they are persons, nevertheless, who deserve in some measure the honorable appellation of teachers. What shall we say of parents who are of decidedly bad principles and

conduct, who give to their children no example except such as is calculated to lead them to destruction? Here, indeed, an opportunity is afforded for the denunciations, the *carmina et vix*, of a prophet, or the stirring eloquence of a holy father and doctor. Here let the voice of the zealous pastor be heard speaking as with authority and grace from on high, in the pulpit, in the confessional, and in his daily walks among his people, for he alone has power to reach the dreadful evil, and to cure it wholly or in part. It is our province merely to call attention to the fact, that while the Church and the school may fortunately prevent many sad consequences in cases where this great evil exists, they do not and cannot relieve parents of the obligation to bring up their children in the knowledge and service of God, and to give them all possible aid, physical, moral, and religious, proper to their state and condition in life.

## CHAPTER LI.

## DOMESTIC EDUCATION.—CONTINUED.

WE now enter upon the last part of our subject, and have to speak of the scholars, in what we term the school of domestic education. The crowd composed of these scholars is as an army advancing upon us who now compose society, possess all its advantages, and fill all the places, high or low, which are in its bestowal. We are the people for whom governments and laws exist, cities stand organized, courts are opened, the rites of religion are celebrated, the custom-house and the merchant's exchange are organized and in full operation. We are the people for whom scientific enterprises are undertaken, for whom steamboats and railway trains are ever ready to take up and carry their



living freight to its destination, unless they happen to blow it up, or sink it down on the road. For us kings reign, soldiers shoulder their arms, lawyers unroll their briefs, merchants post their ledgers, authors starve in garrets, and newspaper editors regulate the universe. Do we ever reflect that the crowd above spoken of is treading on our heels, urging us along, and gradually taking the places which we have considered so particularly and emphatically our own? It seems strange, and yet it is nevertheless true, that in a few years we—all of us—who are professional men, merchants, mechanics, laborers, or idlers, will be all quietly put under the sod, and that there will be plenty of professional men, merchants, mechanics, laborers, and idlers, and yet we shall be neither wanted nor missed.

This is not all, but it is admitted on every side that one of our chiefest duties is to prepare our youthful successors for



performing worthily and conscientiously the duties of the various stations to which they will succeed. The questions accordingly arise: What are they learning? How are they being formed and trained? Where do they pass their time, and by what sort of influences are they governed? All may be summed up in the question which every parent should be able to answer: What is the true character of my child, and by what means and in what manner is that character developing and shaping itself as he grows up? Now, whatever difficulties may surround the social position of the family, we venture to say, that if both parents have been good Christians, faithful in the practice of their religion, and if they have done what rested with them by their offspring during the period of infancy and childhood, they may look forward with hope to the riper period of early manhood or womanhood, which their young people are fast ap-

proaching. If the early influences of the home-school and of religion have been unapplied, inoperative up to the dangerous age when the passions are strongest and reason and experience weakest for good, then a glance into the future must cause, not despair indeed, but at least well-grounded and grave apprehension.

The family and the home are powerful agencies for forming the mind, the heart, the head, and the conscience, the whole character of children. But if this great institution, we repeat, during the first eight, ten, or fourteen years of child-life has been in a state of disorganization, if one parent has been busy in undoing or counteracting the good attempted by the other, or if daughter and son have been, through whatever cause, influenced by it only for evil—or not influenced at all, who is to be blamed for the evil results, or the no-results, which become at last but too evident and alarming? Certainly not the home-

school itself, but the causes which have perverted or paralyzed its action.

And next as to Religion. Is she to be found fault with because a bad state of things exists where her teachings, her examples, her thousand beneficent, exalting, and refining influences, have not been brought to bear on youth, but where, on the contrary, ignorance, neglectfulness, bad example, and every diabolical agency has been allowed to usurp the time and the place where she ought to have reigned supreme? Who can enumerate the crowd of baneful influences which, at the period we have now come to consider, threaten youth as it emerges into a broader and freer world! There are newspapers, some of them sickly and sentimental, that injure the brain which they weaken and distemper. There are flash publications, consisting of light, fictitious matter, which encourage habits of idleness and indolence, whilst they do still more harm by filling

the mind with wanton images and the heart with unholy desires, fostering and stretching the imagination at the expense of the other mental faculties, developing early the passion of love, and creating perverted and exaggerated erotic tendencies which Nature never intended to satisfy. Then there are low associations, and vulgar places of amusement, obscure theatres, dancing-houses, and the unhealthy and demoralizing resorts where the first lessons are given and taken in intemperance, gambling, and petty thievery.

The practice of that manly, healthful, and ennobling art of swimming becomes, in numerous instances, the occasion of many sinful habits among boys who indulge in it by stealth around the docks of cities, generally against the wish or without the knowledge of their superiors, and quite commonly in combination with truancy from the school or the workshop.

What more rational and innocent than an

escape during the fiery summer months from the city to the coolness, the shade, and the pure air of the country? And yet who needs to be told that similar excursions, when gotten up under improper auspices, or when poorly officered and ill regulated, are fraught with many dangers both to body and soul, and even become the occasion of a first fatal acquaintance with sin, shame, and life-long misery! Woe be to the child whose parents awake to a knowledge of these sad evils only after they have left their degrading mark on the soul of youth, who discover the wound only when it has begun to fester! The evil might have been prevented, the occasion of sin might perhaps have approached and passed by without injury, had prudent foresight and proper vigilance guarded unwary innocence. Now the evil is done, and it is often the case that the experience which teaches crime, makes the boy a man. It is too late to ask



now what rules for training youth are to be applied to the victim. He must be dealt with on the broad principles by which grown men are led to abandon vice and return, with God's assistance, to the practice of virtue. He has a head to be reasoned with, and a heart to be appealed to. It would be a mistake to treat him as a child any longer. You cannot withdraw him from vicious habits by ignoring vice, or by attempting to keep it out of sight. Should you venture to browbeat or to threaten the offender, to drive him like a dumb animal, in place of persuading and convincing him like a man, you will have your trouble for nothing, and probably be laughed at into the bargain.

We must be understood here as making a distinction which might be more frequently acted upon, even by those who have a very fair knowledge of the principles of moral theology. It is the distinction between acts and habits. A child often stum-



bles into the commission of a sinful act without full deliberation, but rather from curiosity, or by accident, or on account of some evil example witnessed perhaps without design on his part. The harm done to the soul of the offender may often appear greater than it really is, under such circumstances. A simple admonition on the part of his kind adviser, or even judicious parental correction, or an appeal to his fears, may be all that is required to prevent a repetition of an act, which he sees plainly grieves his best friends, and must be injurious to himself. The tones of alarm we here speak in, are caused by the repetition of acts and the formation thereby of sinful habit. Here great loving-kindness, united with great firmness, are required on the part of an enlightened parent or adviser. In early years the habit may be one of a lighter sort, gluttony perhaps, peevishness, rudeness, or venial disobedience. Somewhat later, acts are committed, and repeated

more frequently, and with less and less of remorse and shame,—lying, quarrelling, stealing, profanity, and that dread enemy of moral worth and intellectual growth, youthful impurity. Here the wise parent must imitate the action of the holy spiritual physician, who watches carefully the history laid before him by his penitent, and passing gently over single and insulated acts that do not threaten repetition, he fastens firmly on the chief and predominant habit of the soul's life. He enlightens the youthful mind upon the heinousness of this habitual failing, he points out its evil consequences, he stirs up the fear of God, and compunction, he calls forth firm resolutions against the besetting sin and its occasions, and he invokes special grace and guardianship from on high, that his spiritual child may break the half-formed chain, and never more be encumbered by its degrading fetters.

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get the great assistance he may derive from proper and healthful physical and mental exercise. Let him correct the dangers of evil association, not by trying to keep his children separated altogether from the society of those who are of their own age, but by encouraging association with those who are good, and who have virtuous parents to watch over them. It is necessary that parents should study the character of the friends of their children as well as that of the children themselves ; and if they possess the happy faculty of feeling young again in the company of the young, and taking part in their amusements, they will find that they will always be welcomed with joy and pride by those whom they honor with their companionship. The subject of athletic sports and healthy exercise, and their great influence in forming the moral character, as well as in developing the physical frame of our youth, is too frequently overlooked in this country. One of the causes of this is



that youths become men too soon, and one of the consequences is that they acquire the vices and diseases of men far sooner than they should or would do under different management. This is an evil that one can correct in his own family without waiting for the country at large to join him in his action. If he take the course that is wise and proper and approved of, in theory, at least, by all, he will ward off dyspepsia and nervous complaints from his children, and contribute to insure to each of them a sound mind in a sound body.

The evil of precocity, to which we have already alluded, is complained of by many, and especially by those who were born abroad and whose children are natives of this country. The children, they say, grow too fast, and know at ten or twelve years of age what we only learned in Europe when we were twenty-five years old. They ape the manners of men, and copy their vices, and have none of that simplicity and sub-



reality is a little village somewhere up the North River, or in the quietest parts of quiet New England, containing two or three hundred inhabitants, and a city containing a million of souls.

It would be pleasant, no doubt, if the quiet and easy-going ways of good and simple, yet intelligent country people, could be preserved amidst the rush and bustle, the din and roar of a gigantic commercial city. This, however, is impossible. The fact is before us, and we must accept it and do the best we can with it. The children must be educated and trained in spite of their precocity, which means simply that we must begin the work of training them earlier, and do it more thoroughly and more intelligently, than we should be compelled to do were the material in our hands more easily kneaded and shaped to suit our wishes. The actual condition of the children will show whether the teachers are doing what is right, in so far as domestic education is

concerned. Again, by carefully examining these teachers, their maxims and their habits, we shall find it very easy to conjecture what is the condition of their children. So also the condition of the home itself will enable us to judge of the condition of those who dwell in it. In this manner, by knowing what the fruits are, we judge of the tree that produced them; and by knowing what the tree is, we can tell what sort of fruit it will produce.

We have purposely avoided speaking of literary or scientific education, or of any training but the domestic. We are convinced, however, that all sensible persons will join us in classing among abuses to be corrected, all manner of education which unfits the young to live peaceably and contentedly in their own home.

Education is a means, it is not the end of life. It is useful when it prepares and fits young persons to discharge intelligently and conscientiously the duties of

the position they will have to occupy when they come to be young persons no longer. In the professional world, a man ought to study medicine, and not law, if he wishes to be a doctor ; and he ought to study law, and not physic, if he is destined to be a lawyer. The child, then, who is expected to live in the home of its parents, should not be brought up to eat, and dress, and speak, and think, and, in short, to form habits that will make life in that home impossible without discomfort to all its inhabitants. The education which estranges a child from its home, or makes it ashamed of that home, does a still greater evil, it unfits the child in question for all homes of the same kind—for the whole neighborhood. In other words, education, by rendering a person unfit for his home, and his home unfit or distasteful for him, lifts him out of the class of society to which he and his people and his home properly belong.

This is certainly the source of many evils which we all feel and regret. The extravagance in dress and living, which among us goes beyond the luxury of the oldest and wealthiest European capitals, is a consequence of everybody's desire to appear better off than he really is. Each one in the social scale is trying to climb out of the class to which he belongs, and the general ambition is to climb into the next class above. The son is ashamed of the honorable labor or the decent trade by which his father earned a respectable support for himself and his family, and he aspires to a profession. If he possesses extraordinary energy and industry, and meets with unusual advantages, he sometimes succeeds, and is deservedly praised as a self-made man. But the more frequent result of this unclassing of individuals is, that whilst the class which is left loses one who might have distinguished himself as a mechanic,

the class which is aspired to, receives one who is unfit to move in it, is probably only half-educated, and unprepared for the keen competition to which he is immediately exposed. How can this sad experience contribute to the happiness of the individual, or to the good of society at large?

In order to avoid these unpleasant results, let it be the aim of all engaged in bringing up the young, to educate them with reference to what they are to be and to do in after-life. And let no one force himself or be forced by others into a position for which he is unfit, and for which he cannot be fully trained and prepared.

In conclusion, while we do not undertake to condemn schools, even when they are so arranged that the pupils board and lodge in them, we must be allowed to say that this is certainly not the best system of education for the young. The best system



is undoubtedly the one which Providence itself formed, in which the parents of a child attend to its physical training and its moral education, whoever else may be engaged to instruct and develop its reason. Let the heads of schools, then, receive all the credit and respect to which they are entitled ; but let it be remembered that they are not the fathers or mothers of their pupils. Let the advantages of boarding-schools and academies be cheerfully admitted, but after all "there's no place like home."

## CHAPTER LII.

## TIME AND ETERNITY.

THE lesson of Time and Eternity gives man the assurance that his spirit is stronger than all sorrows which may lay their burdens upon him, and enables him to say, "I live," in spite of Death itself.

In looking forward to death, we increase the terrors which surround the grim tyrant, by allowing our fancy to become excited. Death is not the greatest of evils, nor even the severest form of human suffering ; for a person may be tortured by a disorder that does not take away life, and again he may die with little pain, or even without pain at all.

Death can reach only the body. The soul, being a pure spirit, has no elements that can fall apart and dissolve in corruption,

and there is no outside power strong enough to crush and destroy her, God having promised to preserve her immortal. She cannot die nor be killed, with his iron hand, but although he may dissever, modify, and part it from the soul, yet he cannot destroy even the body, for nothing perishes that God created. We shall go through a great change in death, but not enough to take away our identity ; we shall still live, although under different conditions from what we do now.

Religion teaches us to tread the path of life under the guidance of light from above, without yielding to gloomy forebodings in reference to its termination. If we understand the law of God, and honestly follow it, without taking from it by carelessness, or adding to it by superstition, we can walk unhesitatingly on, without fear of the end. We never honor God more than when we confide in His goodness, provided we honestly do our own duty.

We give greater glory to His name when we believe that we shall certainly be saved, than when we tremble at the constant recollection of hell, as if there were not Divine mercy enough to rescue us from its flames. Presumption is a great sin, for it is to hope without doing any thing as a reason for hoping ; but despair is as great a sin, for it is to refuse hope, in spite of all that God does in our behalf as a reason for hoping. An humble but unshaken trust in God's mercy, and in His promises, is the proper frame of mind for a faithful Christian.

Think of God frequently as the great Creator of Heaven and Earth, as the all-wise and all-powerful Ruler of the Universe which He created, as the Judge of the living and the dead ; but let the most ordinary form of the Divine Presence in your memory be that of your most loving and benign Father.

It would be a sin were you to take it upon yourself to hold your salvation as

certain on account of any merit of your own ; but when you make up your mind that you are safe because you know and feel that you are in the hands of God, your trust is a good and holy thing.

In the earliest and rudest ages, Religion presented God to ignorant and untutored generations as always holding a threatening attitude towards the sinner. The great sin of those ages was idolatry, and it was necessary to keep alive in the minds of men the idea of God's tremendous power, majesty, justice, and jealousy, to prevent weak and foolish humanity from falling down and worshipping the sun, the moon, the stars, the rushing winds, and the murmuring waters, the marble statue, and the golden image. But mankind are out of their infancy now, and God appeals no longer to untutored fears, but to mind and heart enlightened by the noontide glory of Christian Revelation.

The danger we now run is, that of hav-



ing the word of God choked up by the thorns, which are the concerns and pleasures of this life—of feeling no interest in the salvation of our souls.

The remedy for this danger is to remember how much He loved us, and how many means of salvation He has prepared for those who love Him in return.

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